



Director General

Garching, 16 March 2015  
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Dr Lindley N. Johnson  
NEO Programs Executive  
Planetary Science Division  
Science Mission Directorate  
NASA Headquarters  
Washington, DC 20546  
USA

*International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN)*

Dear Dr Johnson,

On behalf of the European Organisation for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere (ESO), I am pleased to inform you of our wish to join the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN). To this effect, I send you the attached Statement of Intent.

Please be informed that until further notice, Mr Claus Madsen, Senior Counsellor for International Relations in my Cabinet, will represent ESO at the IAWN.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tim de Zeeuw in black ink, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Tim de Zeeuw

## **The European Southern Observatory's (ESO) participation in IAWN**

In collaboration with the NEO Segment of ESA's Space Situational Awareness, and in the framework of ESO's Discretionary Time Allocation, ESO may perform astrometric measurements of NEOs deemed potentially hazardous, using the ESO Very Large Telescope (VLT). The observations target objects presenting a high-risk value (typically  $PS > -5$  on the logarithmic Palermo Scale index), and which cannot be observed with smaller telescopes (typically, with magnitude in the 23-26.5 range). The VLT astrometry refines the orbit of these objects, ensuring they shall not be lost, and clarifying their status as potential impactor.

In case of a NEO on a confirmed collision orbit, ESO may carry out detailed observations in order to physically characterise the object in question, and thus provide data in support of possible mitigation measures.

## **Statement of Intent for Participation in the International Asteroid Warning Network**

The intent of the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN) is to establish a worldwide effort to detect, track, and physically characterize near-Earth objects (NEOs) to determine those that are potential impact threats to Earth. This network is comprised of a partnership of scientific institutions, observatories, and other interested parties performing observations, orbit computation, modeling, and other scientific research related to the impact potential and effects of asteroids. IAWN endeavors to foster a shared understanding of the NEO hazard and optimize the scientific return on these small celestial bodies. Herein, this statement provides guidance and operational principles for the partners in this network. This partnership is organized consistent with the concept developed within the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

### **Participation**

Participation in the IAWN is entirely voluntary and each participant's activities are funded through their own resources. The IAWN can be supported by survey telescope operations; critical follow-up observations; orbit computation and hazard analysis; observations to characterize specific NEOs; data distribution, processing, and/or archiving; or other analysis and infrastructure contributions. New facilities and capabilities may contribute to the IAWN as they come online and are integrated into the network.

As a condition of participating in the IAWN, the partners accept the existing set of coordination roles amongst the various existing NEO network facilities and agree to a policy of free and open exchange of all data submitted to the network. Distribution of data submitted to the network may be limited for a short period during processing while these data are ingested, correlated and verified.

As conceived, the IAWN may be expanded and enhanced with the identification of new partners and the availability of new capabilities for NEO detection, follow-up, and characterization observations, together with the methods to analyze these data products. As current survey and follow-up capabilities are limited, global coordination and distribution of effort is highly desired.

### **Operational Principles**

The overall needs, goals, and objectives of the IAWN are to:

- Maintain, support, and enhance existing ground-based observation facilities that currently perform discovery and physical characterization of NEOs;
- Develop international rapid all-sky search capacity, geared towards discovering small, imminent impactors;

- Build ground-based facilities to globally survey larger areas of sky to fainter magnitudes;
- Develop a well-positioned space-based infrared survey to discover objects much faster than the current rate; and
- Establish an international communication policy and procedures regarding close approaches and impact risks.

To execute the objectives above, the functions of the IAWN are to:

1. Discover, monitor, and characterize potentially hazardous NEOs using optical and radar facilities and other assets based in the northern and southern hemispheres and in space;
2. Provide and maintain an international clearing house for the receipt, acknowledgement, and processing of all NEO astrometric observations and orbits to provide a global NEO database;
3. Serve as the international focal point for accurate information on the NEO population and any hazards they pose to the Earth;
4. Compute precision orbit determination of specific NEOs that pose a threat with the Earth and provide appropriate warning and evaluation of that threat;
5. Provide a portal for characterization data on potentially dangerous NEOs that are of great interest;
6. Coordinate campaigns for observing potentially hazardous NEOs;
7. Support the development and use of numerical and other theoretical modeling to obtain broader understanding of object characteristics and thus to augment what can be achieved via direct observation;
8. Recommend policies regarding criteria and thresholds for notification of an emerging NEO impact threat;
9. Develop a database of potential impact consequences, depending on geography, geology, population distribution, and other related factors;
10. Assess hazard analysis results and communicate them to entities identified by partners as being responsible for the receipt of notification of an impact threat in accordance with established policies; and
11. Assist Governments in the analysis of impact consequences and in the planning of mitigation responses.

## **Communication Strategy and Planning**

The signatories to this Statement of Intent recognize the importance of being adequately prepared for communications with a variety of audiences about NEOs, close approaches, and NEO impact risks. Participants in the IAWN recognize the need to consult with experts in science communication, risk communication, public policy analysis, and emergency management in developing messages and other content for communication with various audiences. The IAWN intends to be coordinated and prepared for communicating effectively the nature of the NEO hazard and detection of any specific impact threats with national and international political leaders, policy makers, emergency managers, and the general public. Signatories agree to coordinate with validated authoritative sources for:

- astrometric and orbital data (via the International Astronomical Union (IAU)-mandated Minor Planet Center (MPC));
- the computation of impact probabilities (NEODYs and NASA's NEO Program Office);
- the ensuing actions aimed at improving the knowledge of the relevant NEOs (NASA's NEO Program Office and the ESA NEO Coordination Centre);

before the release of any statements to the media or public warning of the potential for impact of any specific asteroid or comet threat.

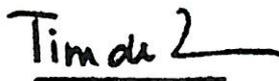
## **The IAWN Steering Committee**

Representatives of core capabilities for the IAWN intend to form a Steering Committee to better coordinate the operation and interchange of the network, and guide its growth, enhancement and evolution. The Steering Committee intends to meet on approximately an annual basis to perform a review and provide guidance and recommendations. All partners in the IAWN are welcome to send representation to the Steering Committee meetings.

## **Signature:**

The objectives of the IAWN can only be realized through a global multilateral partnership dedicated to a better understanding of the NEO impact hazard. Signature on this Statement of Intent serves as an expression of interest in supporting the IAWN and its objectives, but does not constitute a binding commitment.

Signed for the European Organisation for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim de Zeeuw". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tim de Zeeuw  
Director General

Garching, the 16th of March 2015