

PRESS RELEASE

TOKYO, JAPAN SELECTED AS SITE FOR 2017 PLANETARY DEFENSE CONFERENCE

The International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) is pleased to announce that the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) will host the 5th IAA Planetary Defense Conference in Tokyo, Japan, on May 15-19, 2017. The bi-annual conference brings together world experts to discuss the threat to Earth posed by asteroids and comets and actions that might be taken to deflect a threatening object.

This will be the first conference focused on planetary defense to be held in Asia. The 2015 International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) Planetary Defense Conference was held on April 13--17, 2015 in Frascati, Italy. This was the sixth in a series of conferences that began in 2004 in Anaheim, California, with subsequent conferences in Washington, D.C. in 2007, Granada, Spain in 2009, Bucharest Romania in 2011, and Flagstaff, Arizona in 2013.

A total of 245 individuals representing 21 different countries attended the 2015 conference. Attendees included 16 members of the press. The conference included a total of 81 oral presentations plus 25 short oral introductions of poster papers. A total of approximately 80 poster papers were accepted and posted at the conference. In general the conference followed a similar to that for the previous conferences: the conference was single track, meaning that sessions were sequential, and participants were able to attend all of the sessions offered. This feature was seen by many as a very positive characteristic of the meeting in that it gave each participant the opportunity to become familiar with virtually all aspects of planetary defense, including what we know about asteroids, how we might deflect a threatening object, the effects of an asteroid impact, and response to an asteroid impact disaster. Information on the 2015 conference is available at <http://pdc.iaaweb.org>.

Based on perspectives and concerns raised during the hypothetical threat exercise, there could be much distrust and misunderstanding when an actual threat is discovered. Such misunderstandings could affect development and execution of both deflection and disaster response actions. This amplifies the need for 1) continuing and increased efforts to provide ongoing and factual information on NEOs to the public and leadership, and 2) the development of protocols and guidelines for providing information announcing the threat and providing status during the evolution of the threat and its response. Periodic surveys of public understanding of the asteroid threat and testing response approaches might be considered.