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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE:

26 September 2007

Dear Dr. Dominik,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of 14 August 2007, enquiring whether the Secretary-General could consider participating and presenting views and policies of the United Nations at a scientific discussion meeting to be held in 2009 at the Royal Society in London.

I thank you for your enquiry. However, I must inform you that it is too early to envisage the Secretary-General participation in the event. However, feel free to submit your request again in 2009, for our consideration, should you so wish.

With thanks for your understanding.

Yours sincerely,

Yeocheol Yoon
Special Assistant
Chief, Scheduling Office

Dr. Martin Dominik
Royal Society University Research Fellow
School of Physics and Astronomy
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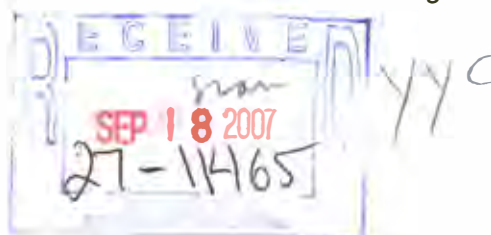
Dr Martin Dominik
Royal Society University Research Fellow
School of Physics & Astronomy

14 August 2007

His Excellency
반기문

Secretary-General of the United Nations
UN Headquarters
First Avenue at 46th Street
New York, NY 10017

Repet



Dear Mr Secretary-General,

I plan to organize a Scientific Discussion Meeting to be held at the Royal Society in London over two days in 2009 on the topic of "The detection of extra-terrestrial life and the consequences for science and society", bringing together not only the top scientists of different disciplines, but also philosophers, theologians, and policymakers of society. //

For centuries, humankind has been fascinated by the thought that life may exist on other 'Earths', and this has been widely popularized in the science-fiction literature. Astronomers are now able to discover planets around stars other than the Sun that could harbour life forms, and space missions that could be launched in about a decade might find bio-signatures in the composition of planetary atmospheres. Should life be that common in the Universe that it already exists on planets orbiting nearby stars, even the detection of extra-terrestrial intelligence might once turn from science-fiction to reality.

The news that we are not alone would have a significant impact on humanity, and risks of several kind are associated to it. Therefore, we need to be properly prepared, and develop policies. I think that this cannot be left to national governments and hope for the political leadership of the United Nations, who already put related issues on their agenda, most prominently with the establishment of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs and the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 2222 (XXI) "Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies".

Confirmed scientist speakers so far include:

- *Frank Drake*: radio astronomer (carried out first systematic scientific search for extra-terrestrial intelligence)
- *Baruch Blumberg*: former Director of NASA Astrobiology Institute, former President of the American Philosophical Society (Nobel Laureate Medicine 1976)
- *Marvin Minsky*: cognitive scientist (Turing Award 1969)
- *Simon Conway Morris*, paleobiologist (Walcot Medal 1987, Lyell Medal 1998)
- *Michel Mayor*: astronomer (Balzan Prize 2000, Albert Einstein medal 2004, Shaw Prize in Astronomy 2005, discovered both the first and the to date most Earth-like extra-solar planet)

Catherine Cesarsky (president of the International Astronomical Union) will also be present at the meeting.

A most distinguished theologian will be selected following correspondence with the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, His Eminence William Joseph Cardinal Levada, and it is being considered to involve His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI himself.

The date of the meeting falls in a rather small time corridor for building a bridge between those who pioneered their respective field in the last century and those who will be the leading explorers over the coming decades. Several of the former will be unlikely to be with us once extra-terrestrial life is being detected, and we only now still have the chance to consult them.

All the confirmed speakers are enthusiastic about the topic of the meeting and the arising opportunities for wide interdisciplinary exchange, and would look forward discussing with you. I would therefore like to kindly ask whether you could imagine participating and presenting views and policies of the United Nations. //

Sincerely yours,

Martin Dominik

Dr Martin Dominik