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## Declaration of Principles Concerning the Conduct of the Astronomy-based Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI)

**The International Academy of Astronautics Adopts Updated Declaration of Principles Concerning the Conduct of the Astronomy-based Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI)**

**Paris, France** – The International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) has officially ratified an updated version of the “Declaration of Principles Concerning the Conduct of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) – 2026 Update”. This landmark document represents the first major overhaul of the IAA “post-detection protocols” in over 15 years and provides guidance to SETI astronomy researchers and their institutions about scientific rigor and transparency in a media landscape transformed by social media, artificial intelligence, and the 24-hour news cycle. The update process required several years to complete and involved more than 350 SETI researchers and practitioners from around the globe.

SETI and Technosignature research has evolved significantly since the previous protocols were first adopted in 1989 and revised in 2010. Recognising that a potential detection of extraterrestrial technology beyond Earth would be a transformative event for humanity, the new Declaration establishes a rigorous framework for verification, transparency, and global risk communication.

"The information environment we operate in today is vastly more complex than it was in 2010," said Professor Michael Garrett, Chair of the IAA SETI Committee and Professor of Astrophysics at the University of Manchester. "In an era of deepfakes, automated misinformation, and instant global connectivity, unverified claims could trigger confusion or panic. These new protocols guide SETI scientists in maintaining the highest standards of evidence before making announcements to the world."

The updated Declaration addresses several modern challenges identified by the Committee:

- **Technosignatures beyond Radio:** Acknowledging that the search now spans the entire electromagnetic spectrum, including excess infrared heat signatures from megastructures, optical laser emission, and even multi-messenger signals.
- **Protection of Researchers:** Establishing safeguards for scientists who may face harassment, doxing, or intense media pressure following a potential detection.
- **Digital Integrity:** Managing the risk of "viral" rumours and ensuring verified data is distinguished from hoaxes or terrestrial interference.

**Verification Before Announcement** The core tenet of the Declaration remains that "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence". The Declaration specifies that SETI practitioners and their institutions should be responsive to queries about their research, and that if a rigorous verification process ever does confirm that a signal or other evidence is due to extraterrestrial intelligence, then this should promptly be reported fully to the public, the scientific community, and the UN.

"We do not shout “alien” the moment we see a strange blip," Professor Garrett added. "The scientific method demands we check, check again, and then ask others to check. Only when we have reached a consensus that a signal is credible do we bring it to the world."

**The 'No Reply' Consensus** The updated Declaration also reaffirms an enduring principle from the original 1989 Declaration: that transmitting a response to a confirmed detection of extraterrestrial intelligence is a decision that belongs to all of humanity. It states that no response should be sent until appropriate international consultations have taken place, specifically through a broadly representative body such as the United Nations, and that SETI practitioners should cooperate with such consultations

**Next Steps** The IAA SETI Committee will now move to establish a permanent Post-Detection Sub-Committee, featuring experts in social science, law, and ethics, to advise on the longer-term societal implications of a confirmed discovery. The new Declaration will be lodged with other stakeholders, including the United Nations.

A formal technical presentation of the protocols to the wider community, including the scientific press, will take place at the International Astronautical Congress (IAC) later this year in Türkiye.

**The Revised Declaration** The full document is available at:

<https://iaaspace.org/wp-content/uploads/iaa/Scientific%20Activity/iaasetideclaration.pdf>

**About the IAA SETI Committee** The IAA SETI Committee is the world's primary international body dedicated to the scientific, technical, and societal aspects of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. It was founded in 1971.

**About the IAA** The IAA is an independent, non-governmental organisation founded in 1960 to foster international cooperation and the advancement of astronautics for peaceful purposes. Bringing together leading experts from space agencies, academia, and industry worldwide, the IAA promotes scientific exchange, interdisciplinary research, and strategic studies on the future of space exploration and utilisation.