



ASSOCIATION OF SPACE EXPLORERS

ASE's Alpha Principles

Safety

The designers, builders and operators of the international space station should consider the safety of the station's crews to be of paramount importance. When the health and security of the crew is assured, productivity and mission success rates are at their highest. An assured crew-return capability should be incorporated from the start, and an Earth-based rescue capability should be studied and implemented at the earliest practicable time.

Universality

From the outset, the operations systems of the international space station and the transport spacecraft that service it should be designed and constructed with an eye to simplicity and universal compatibility. Prospective station crews from all participating nations should be invited to consult on the development of the station's operational systems. Final decisions on the orbital inclination of the station should be based on the mission objectives of the station, and on its accessibility from the world's current launch facilities.

Sustainability and Expandability

The goal of the international space station should be that it will maintain full operability for a minimum of twenty-five years, or one human generation. This duration of viability is achievable with current technology, respects the limits of today's capabilities, and recognizes the inevitably rapid advancement in space habitation and operations technologies over the next two decades. To ensure that the station is utilized to its full extent over this period, modular expandability should be built into the station from the outset.

Shared Investment

One of the principal benefits of a truly international space station is that no one nation is unduly burdened with the responsibility of overall financial investment. Similarly, different nations have different assets and different strengths, factors which should be duly considered as determinations are made as to which nations shall make which contributions to the station.

Quality Assurance

Participating nations should seek the services of contractors who make legal guarantees about the quality of their workmanship in building station hardware, software and payloads. Space agencies and contractors should agree in advance to work cooperatively with international quality assurance teams to guarantee product performance and compatibility.

Shared Utilization

The international space station will be Earth's space station. As such, the world community's use of the space station as a scientific and technological resource should be welcomed. An institutional framework, perhaps an adjunct of the United Nations, should be established that enables the nations of the world to apply for appropriate use of this unique off-world platform. Likewise, appropriate station access should be guaranteed in the service of a wide range of human research and inquiry.

Shared Benefit

Missions and payloads should be selected according to their potential to make an important difference in their specific disciplinary area. While private commercial payloads should be welcomed as a means to finance the station, the results of all other mission activity and payload work should be shared freely among all nations who subscribe to this set of principals.

Interpersonal Respect and Consensus

Nations should pledge gender and cultural diversity in the selection of crews for the international space station. Crew members should be selected not only with regard to their purely professional capability, but also with regard to their propensity to display gender and cultural sensitivity in the day-to-day operation of the space station. Non-mission issues that arise in the course of station operations should be resolved in meetings of full crew complements according to established procedures of consensus, in which all crew members should be trained prior to their missions.

Political Immunity

All nations participating in the operation of the international space station should pledge that political developments in their countries will not negatively impact their commitment to or constructive participation in the operation of the station. Crew members should not be forced to alter their behavior in any way for the duration of their mission as a response to political developments in their countries. Conversely, crew members shall not treat their fellows differently as a result of political developments on Earth. If in designing, building and operating an international space station nations agree to allow these principles to serve as guides, then in the next millennium we may be truly able to say that we have successfully channeled the use of Space for Life.