

PRESS RELEASE



UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN MADRID

Groundbreaking for new antennas and celebration of 50 years of operation of the Madrid Deep Space Communications Complex (MDSCC) in support of NASA's Deep Space Network (DSN)

On September 16, a celebration will be held at the Madrid Deep Space Communications Complex (MDSCC), located in Robledo de Chavela, Comunidad de Madrid, to commemorate 50 years of operation and break ground for construction of two new antennas. The MDSCC, established in 1964, is a cooperative space program between the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Spain's National Institute for Aerospace Technology (INTA). The station is used to track and gather information from spacecraft and deep space probes, and to conduct research in radio astronomy.

The two new antennas at the MDSCC (Antennas DSS-56 and DSS-53) are part of a \$100 million investment by NASA in the MDSCC, with projected completion by 2020. The Government of Spain also recently authorized the exchange of letters extending and amending the Agreement for Scientific Cooperation Agreement for the MDSCC. The provisional application of this amended agreement will extend the tracking station cooperation between Spain and the United States through 2024.

The MDSCC is one of only three stations that make up the DSN global network. The two other centers are located in Canberra, Australia, and in Goldstone, California, in the United States. These geographic locations, approximately 120 degrees apart, were chosen to allow 24-hour tracking of space missions, regardless of the Earth's daily rotation. Along with the complexes at Goldstone and Canberra, MDSCC serves as our connection to approximately three-dozen missions beyond geosynchronous Earth orbit at any point in time. These missions include spacecraft visiting planets, asteroids, comets, and even the two Voyager spacecraft that have left our Solar System. While these are primarily NASA missions, they also include spacecraft from other nations – supporting the globalization of space exploration.

The DSN currently constitutes the largest, most sensitive telecommunications system for scientific applications in the world. When the first human foot touched the soil of another world, that image was received here in Spain. From the first photos of the Earth taken from the Moon, to missions to Mars and the recent amazing images of Pluto, to remaining in contact with the inconceivably-distant Voyager probe, the DSN has played a crucial role in every space exploration initiative, helping to realize mankind's highest aspirations.

For more information on the MDSCC, please see <http://www.mdsc.nasa.gov/index.php>



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