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Professor Stephen
Hawking
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[Stephen Hawking Spoke at NASA's 50th Anniversary](#)

NASA should accelerate Moon and Mars colonization, he reckons

Renowned British physicist Stephen Hawking was invited yesterday to speak at NASA's 50th anniversary at Washington, DC. During his lecture, professor Hawking attacked the matters of Moon and Mars colonization, the underfunding of space exploration and the possibility of existence of alien life in the universe. He believes that the top priority of space exploration would be to create two permanent colonies on Mars and the Moon, as well as increasing the budget for space projects to 0.25 percent of the world's financial resources, only ten times larger than that of NASA. "The Moon could be a base for travel to the rest of the solar system... and Mars is the obvious next target," said Hawking in his speech. The advantages are clear; both are relatively close to us and may have vast supplies of water, not to mention the possibility of past existence of life. Other space experts have frantically asked NASA to send a manned mission to a near Earth asteroid, however Hawking failed to mention anything about such a mission. This may have something to do with the fact that asteroids are not quite ideal for establishing a permanent outpost, mainly because of lack of resources and the effect of microgravity on living tissue. **Lunar and Martian outposts**

Professor Stephen Hawking also stated it is imperative that NASA accelerates the plans to establish an outpost on the Moon. "A goal of a base on the Moon by 2020 and of a manned landing on Mars by 2025 would reignite the space programme and give it a sense of purpose in the same way that President Kennedy's Moon target did in the 1960s," he explained. "Robotic missions are much cheaper and may provide more scientific information, but they don't catch the public imagination in the same way, and they don't spread the human race into space, which I'm arguing should be our long-term strategy. If the human race is to continue for another million years, we will have to boldly go where no one has gone before," said professor Hawking. **Space travel** Eventually, the human race would expand to other habitable planets orbiting around near stars, albeit this would be far more difficult than going to the Moon or Mars. And not because of the large distances involved, but mostly to the fact that there aren't too many Earth-like planets in the area. However, if ten in 1000 stars in a radius of 30 light years have Earth-like planets in the habitable zone, then we shouldn't hesitate to visit them. "We cannot envision visiting them with current technology, but we should make interstellar travel a long-term aim. By long term, I mean over the next 200 to 500 years," he said. This doesn't necessarily mean that humanity should give up fighting with the current resource and pollution problems experienced on Earth. **Alien life** "Even if we were to increase the international space exploration budget 20 times to make a serious effort to go into space, it would only be a small fraction of world Gross Domestic Product. Isn't our future worth a quarter of a percent?" Hawking asked. He also explains why the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence has failed so far in detecting alien life. The problem stands in the 'Intelligence' word. Any forms of life are extremely rare in the universe, we only have to look at our solar system to understand that. Intelligent life would be several magnitudes rarer, and then there would be the possibility that the alien civilization destroyed itself. "Personally, I favor the second possibility - that primitive life is relatively common, but that intelligent life is very rare. Some would say it has yet to occur on Earth," concluded Hawking.