

IAF SYMPOSIUM ON PLANETARY DEFENSE AND NEAR-EARTH OBJECTS (E10)
Planetary Defense from Asteroids and Comets (1)

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SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2021 IAA PLANETARY DEFENSE CONFERENCE

Abstract

The 2021 International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) Planetary Defense Conference (PDC) was held virtually on April 26 through 30, 2021 and was hosted by the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA). The conference was sponsored by 13 organizations, over 900 individuals registered (there was no fee), and total attendance included over 700 individuals, with 250 to 300 individuals participating at any given time. Since the conference was held virtually, it was possible to design the conference program so that individuals in nearly all parts of the world could attend. This plan enabled participation by individuals from 50 nations and 97 technical papers were presented. This paper provides a summary of activities at the conference and highlights the realistic but fictitious Asteroid Threat Exercise that examined the threat mitigation and disaster management responses to a six-month warning of a potential asteroid impact on our planet. A highlight of the conference was a panel that included representatives of seven national space agencies, UNOOSA, and two astronomical institutes. Panel discussions demonstrated their awareness and support of Planetary Defense activities. A primary outcome of the conference was unanimous attendee support for an International Year of Planetary Defense (IYOPD, name TBC) similar to the 2009 International Year of Astronomy. The 2029 close passage of asteroid Apophis is a natural opportunity to hold the event, raise awareness about the hazard, demystify the topic, and connect current and future communities. In closing, the UNOOSA announced that it will again host the Planetary Defense Conference in 2023 and hopes that the 2023 conference will include in-person attendance at the UN facility in Vienna, Austria. Given the positive comments from attendees at the 2021 conference, it is likely that the 2023 conference will offer virtual attendance opportunities as well.