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**STATEMENT OF DR. JAMES C. FLETCHER, NASA ADMINISTRATOR
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Thank you, Marlin, and good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Today President Reagan issued a new National Space Policy designed to guide United States' activities in space well into the future.

This policy confirms the basic goal of United States' leadership in space, and the President's strong commitment to the Space Station as the key to such leadership.

The policy reaffirms that space activities serve a variety of vital national goals and objectives. Among them are the strengthening of United States' scientific, technological, political, economic and international leadership. In fact, the new policy stresses that civil space activities contribute significantly to enhancing America's world leadership.

The President's new space policy is a comprehensive statement. It was derived from a long and thorough review of previous Presidential directives, and of assessments of current and future opportunities.

Secretaries Verity, Burnley and Aldridge and many others in the Administration were involved in this process, as was NASA.

With the new policy, President Reagan has added a major new thrust to the objectives and directions that have guided the civil space program for the past three decades. The policy clearly establishes that, for the first time, the United States has a long-range goal of expanding human presence and activity beyond Earth orbit into the solar system.

This is a goal of enormous significance with potentially historic future implications.

This is a policy of investment in the future. It lays the necessary groundwork now for the decisions of the next century. It puts a challenge squarely on NASA. And it is a challenge we accept.

The new policy reaffirms the President's strong support for the Space Shuttle and for the permanently manned Space Station the United States is developing with the expected participation of its allies.

The President's policy stresses the unique and vital role of the Space Shuttle in the nation's Space Transportation System. It calls for further enhancing the system's capabilities, as new requirements emerge; and for NASA and the Department of Defense to work together to develop new, cost-effective launch systems, one of which is the Advanced Launch System, to enhance national capabilities for transportation to, from and within space. The policy also states that the national security sector will continue to use the STS in response to that sector's specific mission requirements.

With regard to the Space Station, the policy states that the station is to contribute directly to the preservation of United States' preeminence in manned spaceflight and to the goal of expansion of human presence and activity into the solar system.

But to prepare for that development, the policy focuses appropriately on the near-term - on the development and testing of the emerging, innovative "Pathfinder" technologies that will make future decisions possible. The Pathfinder program will permit a future Administration to act with confidence in deciding on specific manned exploration goals and timetables to meet them. In this area, as in several other areas, the policy recognizes the critical role that technology advances have played and will continue to play in preserving this nation's leadership in vital areas of space activity and on Earth, as well.

The policy recognizes the existence of a separate commercial sector, as well, and reaffirms the President's strong commitment to encouraging a healthy and expansive commercial space industry.

I stress that last point because, although I've been addressing primarily the civil sector portions of the National Space Policy, the policy also says a great deal about commercial space. And in that regard, there has been a related effort underway to develop special initiatives in support of the President's thrusts to develop the commercial use of space.

NASA has long been in the forefront of this effort and supports the goals of those initiatives whole-heartedly. In this regard, NASA will take the lead in implementing many of these initiatives, including Government actions to lease space on a new, commercially financed, developed and managed on-orbit space facility.

I believe that Secretaries Verity and Burnley will also want to speak about these important new initiatives in just a moment.

But let me sum things up by saying that the President's new National Space Policy has recharged the nation's space program by giving it new momentum and the prospects of new challenges and new opportunities.

Time and again, Americans have demonstrated that we can lead in exploring new frontiers and in developing their potential for the benefit of humankind.

This new policy charts a clear course on the greatest frontier of all - space.

Thank you very much. And now, I'll turn it over to Secretary Verity.