

Remarks As Prepared For Delivery
By the Honorable Shana Dale
NASA Deputy Administrator
Administrator's Briefing
Launch of STS-120
October 23, 2007

Thank you for that introduction Bill, [*Bill Parson, Director, Kennedy Space Center*]. I'd like to thank all of you, our special guests, for joining us at this launch of STS-120, the Space Shuttle Discovery.

And I'd like to recognize:

- Our friends from Congress – Congressman Bishop and Congressman Feeney,
- Our friends and partners from across the Atlantic,
- And finally, several American service members who have been wounded and return from duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thank you for your service; thank you for your sacrifice; and thank you for honoring us with your presence today.

Nothing compares to a launch. I remember attending my first launch in the early 1990s. I am one who experiences the full gamut of human emotions, but not so much on the weepy end. But during this launch and many others, I felt tears rolling down my cheeks. As the launch blast rumbled through my body and the heat touched my face, I was overwhelmed.

Overwhelmed by a deep sense of patriotism as I thought about American astronauts rocketing into space and overwhelmed by a deep sense of awe at the technological achievement of the human race. If you have yet to see a shuttle launch up close and personal, you are in for a truly remarkable and awe-inspiring experience.

For today's mission Discovery's first duty is construction. The shuttle is carrying up a new node named Harmony. Harmony has been described as "a high-tech hallway," the piece that makes the rest possible. Harmony will serve as the link between the International Space Station and two research facilities – Columbus, the European Space Agency's laboratory and Kibo,

the Japanese Experimental Module – which will be installed on the next two shuttle flights.

With those additions, the International Space Station will truly be transformed into an amazing science laboratory. Installing Harmony is Discovery's primary mission. But there are several others as well. All told, the crew is scheduled to perform five spacewalks that will continue the highly complex and highly precise work as we march towards final assembly of the International Space Station in 2010.

The International Space Station is one of the most amazing engineering and construction projects ever attempted. It has also been one of the most challenging to complete. When finished, it will be more than an amazing laboratory; it will have added volumes to our collective experience in tackling large engineering challenges in microgravity and it will stand as a monument to determination, perseverance, and achievement.

But even as we're counting down to the launch of Discovery and to the completion of the International Space Station, we're also building up to the next steps, the next great era of space exploration. As Mike Griffin has stated, the International Space Station is a toehold in humanity's efforts to explore space.

Our next toehold is an outpost on the moon. At NASA, we've been given the charge and challenge of opening a way of exploration to the Moon, Mars, and beyond. We seek to do this in close collaboration with our international partners. Unlike an earlier era, we're going back to the Moon to stay. This is no longer a vision; it is steadily becoming a reality.

Work has begun on America's next spacecraft and launch vehicle that will replace and go beyond the capabilities of the Space Shuttle. Like our Space Shuttle today, Orion and Areas will launch us into low Earth orbit and enable us to rendezvous with the ISS but they also will allow us to break out beyond this region and journey to the moon – a capability we have not possessed since the days of Apollo.

Admittedly, years will pass before those vehicles take flight. Like the construction of the International Space Station, this is another long-term project, being done in accordance with budget realities. Because of those realities, a gap of almost five years is expected between retirement of the

Space Shuttle and flight of Orion/Ares. Almost five years that NASA will not be flying humans into space.

But we are making progress. And we'll continue to do so: Building, learning, reaching.

That's perhaps the most important aspect of today's launch. Quests of discovery are as old as humanity itself. Yet few such efforts are easy. But we keep reaching out again, out of never-ending hope and steadfast desire. We go to see what is beyond the horizon, to test ourselves against the unknown, to face our fears and overcome the challenges using all of our ingenuity and determination. That's the spirit of exploration. That's why the space program shows us at our best: dreaming, daring and achieving.

Thank you again for coming here, and for showing your support for the space program. God bless the crew of STS-120 and Go Discovery!