

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration  
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Reply to Attn of: Science Mission Directorate

**Summary of NASA Responses to Mars Sample Return Independent Review Board Recommendations**

The Mars Sample Return Program (MSR) is a jointly planned mission with the European Space Agency to return samples from the surface of Mars to Earth. It represents the bookend of the strategic “Follow The Water” Exploration Program for Mars to return samples from a carefully selected site with the highest potential for pre-biotic chemistry and extant or extinct life. As such it opens the door for new directions in exploration of the Red Planet by robots and humans in the not-too-distant future.

The MSR Independent Review Board’s (IRB) non-consensus report affirms that MSR is a strategically and scientifically important mission and includes 59 recommendations that identify critical areas NASA must consider to improve the likelihood of mission success.

NASA accepts the overall conclusion of the MSR IRB that the MSR mission must be reexamined, and is appreciative of the Board’s work. The Science Mission Directorate is establishing an MSR IRB Report Review Team, under the direction of SMD Deputy Associate Administrator Sandra Connelly, with participation by ESA, to review and respond to the Report findings and recommendations in detail, and to make a recommendation to NASA and ESA leadership by the second quarter of FY 2024 regarding a path forward for MSR within a balanced overall Science program.

I want to thank the IRB Chair, Mr. Orlando Figueroa, for his leadership and insights. I also want to thank the highly experienced board that he put together for their hard work and dedication to complete this thorough review in such a short amount of time. The IRB’s analysis will provide helpful insights as we continue the work to realize this ambitious and groundbreaking mission.

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Associate Administrator  
Science Mission Directorate