



ESO/Cou-991 rev.

07.12.2004

EUROPEAN SOUTHERN OBSERVATORY
ORGANISATION EUROPEENNE POUR DES RECHERCHES ASTRONOMIQUES
DANS L'HEMISPHERE AUSTRAL

**FOR
ADOPTION**

**VOTING PROCEDURE:
Simple Majority**

COUNCIL

104th Meeting

Garching, 7 and 8 December 2004

ESO Council Resolution on Scientific Strategy

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ESO Council, considering the report of its Working Group for Scientific Strategic Planning, ESO/Cou-990, and its recommendations in ESO/Cou-964 rev. 2, agrees that

- astronomy is in a golden age with new technologies and telescopes enabling an impressive series of fundamental discoveries in physics (e.g. dark matter, dark energy, supermassive black-holes, extrasolar planets),
- over the last decade, the continued investment of ESO and its community into the improvement of ground-based astronomical facilities has finally allowed Europe to reach international competitiveness and leadership in ground-based astronomical research,
- the prime goal of ESO is to secure this status by developing powerful facilities in order to enable important scientific discoveries in the future,
- only the continued investment in cutting edge technologies, telescopes, instruments and information technology will enable such scientific leadership and discoveries,
- ESO will continue to be open to new members and collaborations, following the principle of furthering scientific excellence,

and accordingly adopts the following principles for its scientific strategy:

- ESO's highest priority strategic goal must be the European retention of astronomical leadership and excellence into the era of Extremely Large Telescopes by carefully balancing its investment in its most important programmes and projects,
- the completion of ALMA is assured and conditions for an efficient exploitation of its superb scientific capabilities will be established,
- the VLT will continue to receive effective operational support, regular upgrading (especially to keep it at the forefront in image quality through novel adaptive optics concepts) and efficient 2nd generation instrumentation in order to maintain its world-leading position for at least ten more years,
- the unique capabilities of the VLTI will be exploited,
- the construction of an Extremely Large Telescope on a competitive time scale will be addressed by radical strategic planning, especially with respect to the development of enabling technologies and the exploration of all options, including seeking additional funds, for fast implementation,
- ESO and its community will continue their successful partnership and seek effective intercontinental collaborations in developing the most important and challenging technologies and facilities of the future.