Media Information
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On a mission: astronauts explore the future of sustainable technology with young BMW professionals.

Six members of the Association of Space Explorers (ASE) to visit BMW Group Research and Innovation Centre – Dialogue on fuel cell development and intelligent lightweight design – BMW supports ASE Planetary Congress in Cologne.

**Munich/Cologne.** Some 80 astronauts from across the globe will be meeting in Cologne this week for the 26th Planetary Congress of the Association of Space Explorers (ASE). As well as providing a platform for discussions between the astronauts themselves, this international gathering will also be aiming to stimulate public interest in science and technology, particularly among young people, and to raise awareness about the need for responsible and sustainable stewardship of our planet. During the congress, six members of the ASE will be visiting the BMW Group in Munich. At the BMW Research and Innovation Centre (FIZ), amongst others the astronauts from Germany, France, the USA and Russia will report on their current missions and will discuss sustainable technology with young BMW professionals. The discussions will focus on fuel cell development and lightweight design – two research fields which are of key importance both for spaceflight and for the future of personal mobility on planet earth.

This year the Planetary Congress will be co-hosted by the Houston, Texas-based ASE and by the German Aerospace Centre (DLR). The discussions will centre on maintaining human health and performance and protecting the environment, and how best to promote these goals through sustainable advances in the fields of technology and energy. The support from event partner BMW will include providing the participants with vehicles. For BMW, which the Dow Jones Sustainability Index has named the world's most sustainable car manufacturer for eight years in a row, this partnership is one element in an extensive programme of environmental and social initiatives.

During their visit to Munich, astronauts Klaus-Dietrich Flade (Germany), Michel A. Tognini (France), Mary Ellen Weber, Kevin Ford and Dr Owen K. Garriott (USA) and Yuriy Usachev (Russia) will take part in a Community Day organised by the BMW Group’s VIP management together with other departments for young BMW Group professionals and for professional conversation with specialized engineers. The astronauts will report on current and upcoming projects and will also be giving their hosts a sense of how scientific research in the field of space will influence future technological developments geared to everyday life on earth.

One topic of these discussions will be the use of hydrogen as an energy source. Both in spaceflight and in the automotive industry, this is seen as a technology with high potential, particularly in the context of hydrogen storage and use. The BMW Group recently emphasised the importance of hydrogen and fuel cell technology for future sustainable mobility when it entered into a cooperation agreement with Toyota Motor Corporation. Under this agreement the two companies plan to carry out combined research and development work on a fuel cell system for vehicles. On a long-term view, hydrogen fuel cell drive systems offer a solution that would turn into reality the vision of locally emission-free vehicles capable of long driving ranges and very short refuelling times. These qualities would make such vehicles suitable for application particularly in medium-sized and large vehicles operating over long distances.

A further focus of the discussions between astronauts and the young BMW professionals will be intelligent lightweight design. With the upcoming market launch of the BMW i3, whose passenger cell is made of carbon fibre-reinforced plastic (CFRP), the BMW Group is set to become the first company in automotive history to use this aerospace-derived high-tech material in industrial-scale production.

**The BMW Group**

The BMW Group is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the world with its BMW, MINI and Rolls-Royce brands. As a global company, the BMW Group operates 29 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries and has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2012, the BMW Group sold about 1.85 million cars and more than 117,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax for the financial year 2011 was euro 7.38 billion on revenues amounting to euro 68.82 billion. At 31 December 2011, the BMW Group had a workforce of approximately 100,000 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been built on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy. As a result of its efforts, the BMW Group has been ranked industry leader in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes for the last eight years.

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