

Committee of Astronomy
of the Polish Academy of Science

Polish Astronomical Society

ul. Bartycka 18, 00-716 Warszawa, Poland, tel. +48 223296108, fax. +48 228410046

Warszawa, 5 November 2008

Mr José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Dear Mr Barroso,

Committee of Astronomy of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Polish Astronomical Society express a surprise and deep concern about giving the name "Kopernikus" to one of the main European space programs GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security). Kopernikus is the German form of the name of the great Polish astronomer Mikołaj Kopernik. We greatly appreciate the very fact of naming the program GMES after his name, however, we cannot accept its German form.

It is generally recognized that Mikołaj Kopernik was a Polish astronomer and his name is commonly written with the Latin form "Nicolaus Copernicus" in the world literature. There is no doubt that he was born in a Polish town Torun and he, and his parents were Polish subjects. Over his whole life he was a loyal citizen of the Polish state. Using a specific form of his name instead of the commonly known and used form "Copernicus" would be unaccountable to the Polish community. We hope that you understand us and will undertake a necessary action to correct this mistake.

Your sincerely,

Prof. Kazimierz Stępień
President of Committee of Astronomy
of the Polish Academy of Sciences

Prof. Edwin Wnuk
President of Polish Astronomical Society