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To whom it may concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Asia-Oceania Neutron Scattering Association (AONSA) to express our concern at the prospect that the Laboratoire Léon Brillouin may be shut down prematurely, perhaps even as early as 2017. LLB is a highly respected and world-leading research centre based around the use of neutron scattering methods for research activities across the physical sciences.

The Asia-Oceania region is of a comparable size and diversity to Europe, thus we are acutely aware of the key role played by regional sources such as LLB. We are still experiencing the effects of the unexpected forced shutdown of the JRR-3 reactor following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, through significantly increased demand and consequent oversubscription of all other medium-flux neutron sources in the region.

The current flagship facility in our region (J-PARC) does not have nearly enough capacity to accommodate all worthwhile neutron scattering experiments. Nor should it attempt to do so, given that most experiments do not actually require the highest possible flux. The ESS in Europe will have even more difficulty absorbing demand, due to the European neutron scattering community being larger than our own and also to the design of the ESS itself, which emphasises new applications in biological sciences (in particular) over the core neutron techniques in which LLB excels. Moreover, with the ESS not expected to be fully operational until 2025, an early shutdown of LLB would have disastrous effects on French participation in that project by denying the critical new generation of PhD students and early career researchers the opportunity to acquire the necessary expertise to make use of it.

We sincerely hope that the LLB continues to receive support at least until the originally anticipated deadline of 2020, and ideally beyond that to maintain continuity in the French neutron scattering community into the ESS era.

Yours faithfully,

The AONSA Executive Committee

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