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Space cooperation between France and Gabon CNES strengthens its cooperation with the Gabonese agency for space studies and observations (AGEOS)

In the presence of President Ali Bongo Ondimba and at the invitation of Etienne Massard, Chief Executive of AGEOS, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall attended the inauguration of AGEOS's new centre of expertise in Nkok, Gabon on Saturday 29 August. The CNES President and his Gabonese counterpart also discussed a possible draft cooperation agreement, setting out the two agencies' desire to cooperate. The various meetings were attended by Ségolène Royal, the French Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, who was visiting Gabon as guest of honour at the New York Forum Africa.

France and Gabon will next year celebrate 30 years of space relations, since it was in 1986 that an Ariane-launcher tracking station—financed by ESA and operated by CNES—was first installed in Libreville. The two countries also cooperate in the area of Earth observation, with AGEOS using Spot images as part of the REDD+ programme (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation).

Founded in 2010, AGEOS has already signed an “Intention of Cooperation” agreement with French Guiana, during the 2015 Paris Air Show. It was there that AGEOS's Chief Executive, Etienne Massard—who is also Secretary General to the Presidency of the Gabonese Republic—invited Jean-Yves Le Gall to the inauguration of AGEOS's new centre of expertise. And the CNES President, who praised Gabon's rapid development in the use of space data, went on to hold talks with his Gabonese counterpart regarding a possible draft cooperation agreement centred around Earth observation.

Talks on the cooperation agreement will continue at COP21 in Paris this December. Its aim is the development of civil applications derived from Earth observation data and the creation of joint application projects. Activities will consist of information and data exchange, through the training of experts and specialists and the organization of workshops, conferences and seminars.

Following his visit to Gabon—a first for a CNES President—Jean-Yves Le Gall said: “I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Etienne Massard for his invitation to attend the inauguration of AGEOS's new centre of expertise, in the presence of President Ali Bongo Ondimba and Minister Ségolène Royal. This is, for CNES, both an honour and a true sign of trust. My sincere congratulations go to Gabon's space stakeholders who have been able, through the use of space data, to preserve Gabon's great equatorial forest with all its biodiversity. I would also like to thank the Gabonese authorities for entering into talks with CNES on a possible future cooperation, which certainly looks very promising.”

Contacts

Pascale Bresson
Alain Delrieu
Julien Watelet

Tel. +33(0)1 44 76 75 39
Tel. +33(0)1 44 76 74 04
Tel. +33(0)1 44 76 78 37

pascale.bresson@cnes.fr
alain.delrieu@cnes.fr
julien.watelet@cnes.fr

cnes.fr/presse