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State visit of French President to the People's Republic of China Preparations for space agenda of COP21 Letter of intent signed on space and climate

Monday 2 November in Beijing, in the presence of French President François Hollande and his Chinese counterpart, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and Xu Dazhe, Administrator of the China National Space Administration (CNSA), signed a letter of intent to establish a framework for long-term cooperation on climate change studies and oceanography.

This letter of intent (LoI) aims to establish a framework for long-term cooperation on climate change studies and oceanography. Through this LoI, CNES and CNSA undertake to promote the Mexico Declaration agreed by the world's Heads of Space Agencies on 18 September, with strong backing from CNSA and CNES; encourage closer exchanges between the French and Chinese research communities, notably around data from the CFOSAT mission; and work on applications based on CFOSAT data, especially in the field of marine meteorology.

CNES-CNSA cooperation is centred on two missions decided by the French and Chinese governments: CFOSAT (China-France Oceanography Satellite), a science mission designed to study ocean surface wind and wave conditions, and SVOM (Space-based multi-band astronomical Variable Objects Monitor), an astronomy mission to observe and characterize gamma-ray bursts, the highest-energy phenomena in the Universe. CNES and CNSA have already signed agreements covering these missions, in 2014 and 2015, with CFOSAT scheduled to launch in 2018 and SVOM in 2021.

CFOSAT in particular is set to prove vital to climate change research. Oceans store a large part of the additional heat generated by climate change and absorb a significant portion of the excess atmospheric carbon gases generated by human activity. Long time-series of space data enable scientists to monitor the effects of global climate change factors such as vegetation cover and air quality, while waves and winds play a key role in the exchanges between the oceans and atmosphere.

After the signature, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "I am very pleased to have signed this letter of intent with CNSA on climate change studies in the presence of President Hollande and his Chinese counterpart. It lends weight to the measures we adopted in September in Mexico and I would like to thank CNSA, as this signature sends an encouraging message ahead of the COP21 climate conference in Paris."

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