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CNES-CEA coordination committee meeting

Wednesday 25 November, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and Daniel Verwaerde, Administrator General of CEA, the French atomic energy and alternative energies commission, were at CNES's Head Office for a meeting of the coordination committee set up under the framework agreement the two agencies signed at the start of this year. The goal is to step up their cooperation in science and technology.

This was the first meeting of the coordination committee since the signing of the CNES-CEA framework agreement last January.

The new five-year framework agreement follows a previous accord signed in 2004 and seeks to pursue the close collaboration the two agencies have sustained for more than 50 years in astrophysics, achieving fine results. Good examples are the Herschel space telescope and contributions to major astrophysics missions such as SVOM, Euclid and Athena, and Earth-observation missions like MicroCarb and MERLIN, designed to measure regional greenhouse gas emissions.

The new agreement covers not only astrophysics but also climate and environmental sciences, fluid physics, radiobiology and life sciences. CNES and CEA have also identified 20 other technology themes of shared interest, among them nanotechnologies, cryogenics, optoelectronics, new materials and modelling.

The steering committee meeting reviewed progress and set priorities for both science and technology. On the science side, Earth observation and more specifically greenhouse gases were a focus of discussion. The expertise of the LSCE climate and environmental science laboratory, a joint research unit of the French scientific research centre CNRS, CEA and Versailles Saint-Quentin University, will prove vital in this respect, especially for the MicroCarb and MERLIN missions.

CEA also set out its medium-term vision, proposing to CNES that the two agencies identify points of convergence and shared interest in areas relating to digital infrastructures and Big Data.

Daniel Verwaerde, who had previously taken a close part in the renewal of the framework agreement as CEA's Director of Military Applications, expressed his satisfaction with the rich harvest of scientific results achieved and with the good relations, mutual trust and shared enthusiasm between the agencies' teams. Jean-Yves Le Gall said he was pleased that this most constructive first coordination meeting with Daniel Verwaerde and his team had injected new momentum into the longstanding cooperation through which the two agencies have accomplished many successes together.

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