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French-Gabonese space cooperation CNES signs agreement with AGEOS on Earth observation

In Gabon's pavilion at the COP21 climate conference, in the presence of Emmanuel Issoze Ngondet, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign and French-speaking Affairs and Regional Integration, and Flore Mistoul Yame, Minister for the Protection of the Environment and Forest and Maritime Resources, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and Tanguy Gahouma Bekale, Director General of AGEOS, the Gabonese space agency, signed a framework agreement at Le Bourget to step up space cooperation between France and Gabon.

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 are also working together in the field of Earth observation, with AGEOS using SPOT imagery as part of the REDD+ programme (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation).

CNES had previously discussed stepping up this space cooperation with the Gabonese authorities at the Paris Air Show last June and during Jean-Yves Le Gall's visit to Nkok in August for the inauguration of AGEOS's new centre of expertise.

The chief aim of this framework agreement is to develop civil applications derived from Earth-observation data and to pursue joint application projects. This will be achieved through information and data exchange, training of experts and specialists and the organization of workshops, conferences and seminars. The agreement also provides for an annual meeting between the two agencies' teams to identify possible future cooperation projects.

After the signing, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "I am delighted to have signed this agreement with AGEOS that will inject new momentum into France and Gabon's longstanding and fruitful collaboration in space. Two of Gabon's ministers did us the honour of attending the signature in their pavilion at the COP21 summit, which shows the importance that Gabon attaches to environmental issues, as reflected in its efforts using satellite data to preserve the biodiversity of its great equatorial forest. CNES shares these concerns and will do everything it can to help Gabon pursue these efforts."

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