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France-United States space cooperation CNES and JPL meet Dr. Virendra Sarohia awarded Palmes Académiques

Monday 11 April, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall met Charles Elachi, Director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), at its headquarters in Pasadena, California. This latest meeting provided the opportunity to review the status of ongoing and future joint endeavours, notably the Mars exploration, space oceanography and Earth-observation programmes.

The unique and longstanding relationship that CNES and JPL have forged reflects the close partnership ties between France and the United States, illustrated by joint missions such as the Curiosity rover operating on the surface Mars for nearly four years now, InSight scheduled to launch in May 2018 and Mars 2020, which will be carrying the French SuperCam instrument.

To review the status of ongoing joint efforts, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall made a visit today to JPL headquarters in Pasadena to meet its Director Charles Elachi. At their meeting they discussed the InSight mission and space oceanography missions such as Jason-3, which reached its final operating orbit in February, and SWOT currently in development. Mr Le Gall and Mr Elachi also considered more forward-looking matters, including the pursuit of the exploration of Mars beyond 2020 and the Europa mission, and the arrival of new CNES interns to work at JPL on planetary exploration projects using nanosatellites, in partnership with the University of Montpellier.

After the meeting, a ceremony was organized at which Jean-Yves Le Gall presented Dr. Virendra Sarohia with the Palmes Académiques, the highest accolade bestowed by France's Ministry of Education. Dr. Sarohia, a leading figure at JPL for more than 40 years, is to be commended for his efforts furthering international cooperation, especially with France. His exemplary career began in 1975 after receiving his Ph.D. in Aeronautics from Caltech in 1975 when he joined JPL's technical staff. The author or co-author of over 70 publications on combustion, turbulent mixing, laser-based sensing and many other areas of research, Virendra Sarohia has been the JPL/Caltech-NASA liaison officer since 2004 and has been instrumental in strengthening the ties between CNES and JPL, both by collaborating with French scientists and working closely with the French Embassy in the United States, as well as the General Consulate in Los Angeles.

In his speech at the ceremony, Jean-Yves Le Gall said: "It is always an enormous pleasure for me to see my colleagues and friends at JPL, our historic and close partner, if not the closest of them all. As always, our discussions with Charles Elachi this morning were most constructive and we are now looking to the future and the extraordinary projects that await us with confidence and expectation. I would also like once again to congratulate Virendra Sarohia for the distinction that it was my honour to bestow on him today, for his remarkable career and for his precious aid in helping CNES to build its relationship with JPL and NASA."

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