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CNES celebrates 50th anniversary of first French-Russian space cooperation agreement

30 June 1966, France and the Soviet Union signed a first cooperation agreement on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space. Over the last 50 years, the two countries have worked together on many emblematic programmes in the fields of science, human spaceflight and launch vehicles, forging true industrial ties in the process.

The close ties that France and Russia have established in space were initiated 50 years ago when President Charles de Gaulle signed a first space cooperation agreement between the two nations on his state visit to the Soviet Union. At the opening of the exhibition on “50 years of French-Russian space cooperation” on 21 June in Moscow at the Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall hailed this first agreement as “a visionary political act of international stature making France the Soviet’s Union’s first western partner in space.” France and Russia have since conducted many emblematic programmes together in the fields of science, human spaceflight and launch vehicles, forging true industrial ties in the process, particularly through the European-Russian firm Starsem and the Soyuz launcher operating out of the Guiana Space Centre (CSG).

This anniversary year has already seen many successes, with the launch in Mars by a Proton vehicle from Baikonur of ExoMars 2016; the launch by Soyuz from the CSG of the Sentinel-1B, Microscope and Fly Your Mission! satellites in April; and the launch also by Soyuz from the CSG of two Galileo satellites in May. The insertion into Mars orbit of ExoMars 2016 in October and the launch by Soyuz from Baikonur of the next International Space Station crew in November—including Thomas Pesquet, who will become the 10th French astronaut to fly in space—will round out the year.

On this anniversary day, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: “With Roscosmos and all of our Russian partners, we are embarking together on new and ambitious collaborations to sustain and further these past 50 years of success. While France and Russia’s historic cooperation in space is rich and diverse, it is also resolutely forward-looking. In addition to programmes already underway, it will continue to push the boundaries of industrial and scientific innovation. In the field of science, we have already charted a roadmap for the next 10 years encompassing solar system exploration, solar physics, the Earth system and life and material sciences in microgravity.”

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