Press release

Paris, 5 July 2016
PR126 - 2016

CNES's Science Programmes Committee (CPS) meets at Head Office in Paris Les Halles

CNES's Science Programmes Committee (CPS) met on Friday 1 July at the agency's Head Office in Paris Les Halles. The committee's chief purpose is to advise the CNES Board of Directors on matters relating to space science research and to help it shape the agency's science priorities.

CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall kicked off the meeting with a brief review of the highlights of the first half of the year, notably the launches of Microscope and ExoMars, the go-ahead to develop MERLIN and commence phase B of MicroCarb, and the consensus achieved by CNES between more than 60 space agencies on the New Delhi Declaration that came into effect on 16 May, materializing their commitment to follow through with the Paris Agreement reached at the COP21 climate conference.

CPS Chair Jean-Loup Puget and his colleagues then looked at the near-term challenges facing the agency, notably wrapping up development of the SEIS seismometer for the InSight mission to Mars and the next meeting of the ESA Council at ministerial level in December, where launchers, the International Space Station and ExoMars will be on the agenda. They also discussed the end of the Rosetta mission with the planned landing of the orbiter on comet Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

A presentation was then given of the SWOT project (Surface Water and Ocean Topography) being developed jointly with NASA, the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) and the UK Space Agency (UKSA). The CPS strongly recommended that CNES engage the development phase of SWOT, which marks a major technology leap in satellite altimetry with high scientific and applications potential.

The CPS also encouraged CNES to go ahead with the Strateole 2 project, which aims to study the dynamics of the tropical atmosphere using long-duration stratospheric superpressure balloons. Lastly, it stated its position on the Science and Observation programmes and heard the recommendations of the inter-agency working group on the study of primordial cosmic radiation.

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