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

CNES's Science Programmes Committee (CPS) met on Wednesday 21 September 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.

Before kicking off its meeting, the CPS touched on the latest twist in the record-breaking Rosetta mission, when the Philae lander was found on 5 September on the surface of comet Churyumov-Gerasimenko, exactly where CNES's engineers had predicted. It then reviewed the highlights of the summer, notably the go-ahead decision to develop the SWOT (Surface Water and Ocean Topography) mission, the signature of the cooperation agreement on the MERLIN mission to measure methane concentrations in Earth's atmosphere, NASA's confirmation of the launch of InSight in 2018 and the signature of the Space and Health framework agreement with INSERM, the French National Institute for Health and Medical Research.

The committee also underlined the key challenges ahead in 2016, starting with the ESA Council meeting at ministerial level at the end of the year in Lucerne, where the main items on the agenda will be the extension ISS operations from 2020 to 2024 and ExoMars. It then looked at climate issues and the roundtable on "How Space Agencies Will Contribute to the Implementation and Follow-up of the Paris Agreement during COP21" to be held at the International Astronautical Congress (IAC 2016), which will be taking place from 26-30 September in Guadalajara. This roundtable will bring together the heads of the world's space agencies to discuss climate issues in the run-up to the COP22 to be held in Marrakesh in November.

CPS members and their Chair Jean-Loup Puget were also given a presentation on the activities of the CADMOS centre for the development of microgravity applications and space operations at CNES and on Earth-observation programmes, particularly the MicroCarb satellite designed to measure global distribution of carbon gases.

Finally, the committee members examined proposed new missions and the numerous opportunities offered to CNES through bilateral cooperation initiatives or through the European Space Agency (ESA), confirming the excellence of France's engineers and scientists, and the quality of its international partnerships.

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