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France-United Kingdom space cooperation Bilateral CNES-UKSA meeting

Thursday 6 October in London, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall met Katherine Courtney, the Chief Executive of the United Kingdom Space Agency (UKSA), at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to discuss France-UK space cooperation.

This latest bilateral meeting between CNES and UKSA, now attached to the UK's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), follows on from the first official meeting between Mr Le Gall and Mrs Courtney last July at which they conducted a broad review of the main areas where the two agencies are working together.

Earth observation is the cornerstone of France-UK space cooperation and was high on the meeting's agenda. Jean-Yves Le Gall recalled the COP22 to be held in Marrakesh in mid-November, where the space agenda will be focused on translating into action the New Delhi Declaration adopted by more than 60 space agencies in May, which underlines the space sector's contribution to the results accomplished at the COP21.

The two agency heads noted with satisfaction UKSA's increased involvement in the Surface Water and Ocean Topography (SWOT) mission to measure the level of surface waters, lakes and rivers, and to precisely determine ocean levels. To this end, they signed an amendment to their current agreement.

They also discussed the MicroCarb programme and the UK's possible involvement in its development. MicroCarb is a satellite intended to characterize carbon gas fluxes on Earth's surface in order to measure natural and human-induced emissions and how much of these emissions are being absorbed by the planet's oceans, vegetation and soils. MicroCarb data will thus enable scientists to gain a closer understanding of exchange mechanisms, how they vary with the seasons and how they are responding to global warming, with a view to better anticipating future evolutions.

Lastly, Jean-Yves Le Gall and Katherine Courtney addressed the key upcoming ESA Council meeting at ministerial level on 1 December in Lucerne, agreeing on the importance of preparing for this meeting and for CNES and UKSA to further strengthen their already close working relationship in this respect.

After the meeting, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "Our discussions with UKSA are increasingly productive and I am glad we were able to move forward on such key issues as preparations for the ESA Ministerial Council meeting and the SWOT and MicroCarb programmes, which are responding to the challenge of the New Delhi Declaration by making a decisive contribution to climate research."

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