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France-South Korea space cooperation CNES and KARI central to the France-Korea Space Forum

Monday 12 December, at the invitation of Fabien Penone, France's Ambassador to South Korea, and Choi Yang-Hee, South Korea's Minister of Science, ICT and Future Planning, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and Cho Gwang-Rae, President of the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), were in Seoul for the France-Korea Space Forum as part of the France-South Korea 2015-2016 year, marking 30 years of space cooperation between the two nations.

At the opening of the forum, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall congratulated and thanked his hosts, paying tribute to the 30 years of successful cooperation in space between France and South Korea. He then underlined the three challenges facing spacefaring nations in a rapidly shifting landscape with new entrants motivated by the needs of their populations and by genuine scientific ambitions. "And not forgetting NewSpace, the new paradigm being shaped by entrepreneurs seeking to transform how space works. South Korea is a fine example in this sense, since after its ambitious telecommunications and Earth-observation programmes, it is now developing its KSLV-2 launcher and envisioning lunar missions," he said.

The first of these three challenges is innovation, today the guiding thread for space driven by disruptive approaches geared to doing more with less, as with the future Ariane 6 launcher. The second is tackling climate change and the key role of satellites in providing evidence of its effects, since 26 of the 50 essential climate variables identified by experts can only be observed from space; since the success of the COP21, CNES has been coordinating the efforts of the world's space agencies to make this challenge a priority for the space sector. And the third challenge is exploration, in particular of the planet Mars, which is becoming the new space frontier as space agencies and traditional space contractors pursue multiple projects spurred by new players.

In conclusion, Jean-Yves Le Gall lauded French-South Korean space cooperation as "an exceptional partnership on which our two nations would do well to focus for the future as we work to foster closer ties between our scientific communities, to identify new areas of cooperation revolving around new ways of developing satellites and above all to assure high-quality training for the engineers and scientists on whose shoulders our future successes will ride."

Minister Choi Yang-Hee added: "As President Le Gall pointed out in a recent interview on making the transition to 'SmartSpace', South Korea has acquired solid experience in smart technologies, especially in telecommunications and data processing, which will enable us to extend our bilateral cooperation."

Contacts

Pascale Bresson
Julien Watelet

Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 75 39
Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 78 37

pascale.bresson@cnes.fr
julien.watelet@cnes.fr

presse.cnes.fr