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French-German space cooperation CNES and DLR apply decisions reached in Brussels and Lucerne

Thursday 26 January, the German space agency DLR presented its traditional New Year wishes in Berlin. On this occasion, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall met Pascale Ehrenfreund, Chair of DLR's Executive Board, and members of the German space community. He took the opportunity to review progress on applying the new Space Strategy for Europe adopted in Brussels by the European Commission, and the advancement of programmes approved at the ESA Ministerial Conference in Lucerne.

As is customary at this time of year, CNES and DLR came together to celebrate France and Germany's special partnership in space, which is the prime mover of Europe's space programme at both the European Space Agency (ESA) and the European Commission. This partnership was consolidated over the past year with the signing of a renewed framework agreement between CNES and DLR, and another agreement concerning the French-German MERLIN satellite (Methane Remote sensing LIdar missioN). Designed and built in partnership with numerous French and German research institutes and set to launch in 2021, MERLIN will advance climate and environmental science by providing data of unprecedented precision on concentrations of methane, the second most prolific greenhouse gas in Earth's atmosphere after carbon dioxide.

CNES and DLR teams are working day in, day out to cultivate this space cooperation between the two nations, pursuing a shared line of action wherever possible. They accomplished great things together in 2016 for the broad benefit of spacefaring Europe, with the huge success of the ESA Ministerial Conference in Lucerne, which secured significant new funding. These advances were a result of the excellent cooperation between France and Germany in their role as pillars of Europe's space programme. The two nations thus worked to achieve the broadest possible consensus on key priorities, while ensuring their industries are ready to gear up and remain competitive in the international arena. With annual funding of €2 billion, CNES and DLR are the main contributors to ESA's programmes.

After the gathering, Jean-Yves le Gall commented: "France and Germany are showing their determination to contribute effectively to a deeper understanding of the factors driving climate change. I would like to congratulate everyone involved in this exemplary cooperation for focusing debate on applications, Earth observation, telecommunications and Mars exploration. I am also delighted to see a convergence of views between ourselves and DLR on the International Space Station. I believe this remarkable relationship of trust, on which we will continue to build, will enable Europe to take full advantage of the major shifts now underway in the global space sector."

Contacts

Pascale Bresson
Fabienne Lissak

Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 75 39
Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 78 74

pascale.bresson@cnes.fr
fabienne.lissak@cnes.fr