Press release

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France-Russia space cooperation
CNES and Roscosmos to study Mercury with PHEBUS instrument on BepiColombo mission

CNES and Roscosmos have signed an agreement concerning the PHEBUS ultraviolet spectrometer designed to study Mercury's exosphere as part of the science payload on the Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) for the European Space Agency's BepiColombo mission.

CNES is overseeing France's contribution to the BepiColombo mission and as such is leading development and system-level integration of the PHEBUS instrument and will be supporting French science activities throughout the operational phase of the mission. The Russian federal space agency Roscosmos is developing the spectrometer scanning system for CNES and involved in interface work on the instrument and associated testing.

The Russian contribution is being led by IKI RAN, the Space Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, mandated by Roscosmos. In France, the LATMOS atmospheres, environments and space observations laboratory, part of the national scientific research centre CNRS, has been selected for this mission.

BepiColombo intends to study the surface composition and environment of Mercury, in particular its dark side. The mission's science objectives are to estimate the planet's stage of geological evolution, probe its chemical surface composition and inner structure, attempt to uncover the source of its magnetic field and study how it interacts with the solar wind, and look for ice at its poles. BepiColombo is scheduled to depart for Mercury in April 2018, arriving in 2025.

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