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# France-Australia space cooperation Successful Austral 2017 balloon flight campaign Promising prospects for future cooperation in sight

**CNES has completed the three stratospheric balloon flights of its Austral 2017 campaign without a hitch, yielding a rich harvest of precious science data on climate, astronomy and technology. CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall visited the Alice Springs balloon launch facility to congratulate the agency's and research laboratories' flight campaign teams. He then met several Australian space executives and officials ahead of the 68<sup>th</sup> International Astronautical Congress (IAC) to be held in Adelaide this September.**

The agreement relative to the Austral 2017 balloon flight campaign was signed in 2016 in Sydney by CNES and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), which operates the Alice Springs launch facility. Started in March, this campaign to collect science data that can only be obtained from the southern hemisphere comprised three balloon flights: the CLIMAT and CARMEN/CASOLBA Earth-observation and technology missions, and the PILOT astronomy mission to map the magnetic field of the Milky Way and gain new insight into the magnetic properties of interstellar dust.

CLIMAT was launched on 3 April to study atmospheric chemistry and physics. CARMEN-CASOLBA, a joint CNES-ESA mission, was launched on 9 April with a suite of Canadian and U.S. instruments to calibrate in near-space conditions solar cells designed for future satellites. PILOT, with a launch mass of more than one tonne and a one-metre primary mirror, was launched on 16 April and reached an altitude of 40 kilometres, carried aloft by a balloon with a span of more than 100 metres. All of the instruments from the three missions have been successfully recovered with excellent scientific and technological results.

Jean-Yves Le Gall also stopped over in Adelaide, which is set to host the 68<sup>th</sup> IAC from 25-29 September. This international event will be putting Australia at the centre of the world space community at a time when it is looking to build up its space capabilities. Recent contacts between CNES and Australian space stakeholders have already identified a number of very promising avenues for cooperation.

Invited to give the Space Industry Association of Australia's Distinguished Lecture at the University of Adelaide, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "During the week of the 68<sup>th</sup> IAC, Australia will be the centre of our galaxy. French-Australian space relations have never been closer than they are today. The success of the Austral 2017 campaign and the emblematic PILOT mission, with a balloon large enough to contain Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, has proved once again CNES's prowess in conducting such complex operations and confirmed our excellent cooperation with Australia. This partnership, which we are now set to extend, holds much promise and we look forward to inventing the future of space with our Australian friends."

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