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Jacques-Emile Blamont made Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour

Wednesday 19 April, President François Hollande awarded the insignia of Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour at a ceremony in the Élysée Palace to Professor Jacques-Emile Blamont, a tutelary figure of CNES and France's space programme.

Born in 1926 and a Professor at the University of Paris since 1957, Jacques-Emile Blamont has made a key contribution to the French space programme. In charge of launching Véronique rockets from Hammaguir, CNES's first Director of Science and Engineering and the man responsible for developing France's first satellites, he was also instrumental in the choice of Kourou as Europe's spaceport and has served as advisor to all 11 CNES Presidents since the agency's inception in 1961.

During his exceptionally long career, Professor Blamont has played a pivotal role in many joint international initiatives, notably with the United States, the Soviet Union and India, where he also spent time teaching. In 2015 he received the Padma Shri, one of India's most prestigious civil distinctions, from the President of the Republic of India. Jacques-Emile Blamont is also the author of many books, including *Réalisme et vision. Une Université en Guyane française* (Realism and vision. A University in French Guiana) in 2001, *Introduction au siècle des menaces* (Introduction to the century of threats) in 2004 and *L'action sœur du rêve. Souvenirs de voyages* (Action and dreams. A traveller's journal).

After the award ceremony, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "This distinction awarded by President Hollande to Professor Jacques-Emile Blamont is a testament to an exceptional career of which the entire French science community can be proud. Professor Blamont is a scientist of world renown. Since taking his retirement in 1991, he has held the post of Advisor to the CNES President and his opinion is always much valued by our space community. In recent years, he has developed a keen interest in new educational technologies, playing a key role in the creation of the University of French Guiana and in supporting digital learning in Haiti. We all know how much we owe Professor Blamont, whose career commands the utmost respect and humility."

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