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Science Programmes Committee Meeting focuses on innovation, climate and exploration

A meeting of CNES's Science Programmes Committee (CPS) was held at CNES headquarters in Paris on Wednesday, 31 May 2017. The CPS advises the CNES Board of Directors on matters relating to space science research and helps it to shape the agency's science priorities.

Kicking off the meeting, CNES management reiterated the international dimension of the agency's science programmes, pointing to its recent collaborations in ocean research (HY-2 and CFOSAT) with China, Mars moons exploration (MMX mission) with Japan, measurement of carbon sources and carbon sinks (MicroCarb project) with the United Kingdom, land vegetation monitoring (Venüs mission) with Israel, Mars exploration (ChemCam and SAM instruments on Curiosity, InSight mission and SuperCam instrument for Mars 2020) and oceanography and altimetry (Jason-1, 2 and 3 satellites and preparation for the SWOT mission) with the United States. CNES's international collaboration is centred on its three priority objectives: exploration to understand the Universe, climate to protect the planet and innovation to serve its citizens.

Two key events in CNES's calendar for the weeks ahead were discussed: Thomas Pesquet's return on Friday 2 June from his successful six-month Proxima mission and preparation for the Paris Air Show, which takes place from 19 to 25 June. The CNES pavilion at the show will present the agency's activities and perspectives and will be open to all.

It was agreed that a briefing will be held on 6 October to prepare for the next CNES Space Science Seminar in 2019. This will be a chance to review the status of programmes and scientific advances since the last Space Science Seminar in 2014, as well as discuss ways to ensure that thinking on future space projects reflects recent developments in the space sector, particularly in launchers and satellites.

Nanosatellites are a highly effective tool for the science community. Their development is opening up a new market, and CNES is positioned in this market, as seen with the Angels demonstrator. As France's national ecosystem continues to take shape, the CPS meeting was a chance to reiterate the need to federate actions by proposing a cohesive plan on science missions, technology miniaturization and ways to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives, wherever long-term operational data is useful.

Lastly, Earth observation and science programmes and the roadmap for Mars exploration were discussed by the members of the Science Programmes Committee.

Contacts

Fabienne Lissak – Head of Media
Pascale Bresson – Press Officer
Raphaël Sart – Press Officer

Tel: +33 (0)1 44 76 78 37
Tel: +33 (0)1 44 76 75 39
Tel: +33 (0)1 44 76 74 51

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

presse.cnes.fr