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European space cooperation CNES and ESRIN meet to discuss Earth-observation programmes

Tuesday 18 July, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall met ESA Director of Earth Observation Joseph Aschbacher at ESRIN, the European Space Research INstitute, to discuss the Earth Observation Envelope Programme (EOEP), future trends in this field and additions to the Copernicus Space Component.

France is the leading contributor to ESA and one of the top three contributors to the agency's Earth-observation programmes. The Earth Observation Envelope Programme, now entering its fifth phase (EOEP-5), enables development of innovative Earth Explorer missions such as SMOS, GOCE, CryoSat, Swarm, Aeolus, EarthCare, Biomass and FLEX. Discussions today also focused on planning for the future, managing missions already in orbit and the use of Earth-observation data for science for society.

Jean-Yves Le Gall and Joseph Aschbacher also discussed future evolutions of the Copernicus Space Component, specifically the possible launch of four new Sentinel Expansion satellites between 2025 and 2027, and planning for Sentinel Next Generation, actions that will be pursued in concert with the European Commission. Copernicus, formerly called Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and launched in 2001, is geared towards giving Europe its own independent capability to observe and monitor Earth, combining data obtained from environmental-monitoring satellites and in-situ sensing instruments to deliver a comprehensive and synoptic view of the planet at all times and supply services to inform public environmental policy decisions. CNES, which is already playing a central role in climate actions, is providing Copernicus with data from satellites like the SPOT, Jason and Pleiades series, and in the future MicroCarb and MERLIN in 2020.

After the meeting, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "I am delighted to see how CNES's and ESA's teams are working together on Earth-observation programmes. A strong and united European space programme is vital to play an active part in climate actions and we are looking forward to welcoming Joseph Aschbacher and his team in the near future to our agency's Toulouse Space Centre to show them how CNES is inventing the future of space."

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