

Press Release

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CNES attends MEDEF summer school: “Think Even Bigger”

Tuesday 29 August, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall appeared as guest speaker at the 2017 summer school for MEDEF—the French employers’ confederation. Joining him for a panel discussion entitled “Think Even Bigger” were Jean-Loup Chrétien, the first Frenchman in space; Anne-Marie Lagrange, exoplanet specialist and Research Director at CNRS, the French national scientific research centre; and Roland Lehoucq, astrophysicist at CEA, the French atomic energy and alternative energies commission.

After touching on the success of Thomas Pesquet’s Proxima mission, which has highlighted France’s position at the cutting edge of space, the President of CNES went on to describe the current context of the space sector as “a very fast-developing environment”. Achievements such as Rosetta-Philae, Galileo, electric propulsion and the Pléiades satellites demonstrate France’s position at the forefront of the European space sector. The development of Ariane 6 and future launchers, plus missions like InSight and Mars 2020, conducted jointly with NASA, demonstrate CNES’s capacity for disruptive innovation in its five areas of activity: Ariane, science, Earth observation, telecommunications and defence applications. By creating ecosystems that foster entrepreneurship and supporting the development of start-ups, CNES also fulfils its role as a source of innovation and job creation.

Faced with the global players of NewSpace who, while speeding up synergies between the digital economy and the space industry, tend to fuel fantasies by promising the imminent colonisation of Mars, the French and European space industry has the ability to rise to the challenges of this century by continuing to focus on reality. Developing the scope of application of space technologies, increasing the number of global collaborations on the climate, plus promoting miniaturisation and embedded intelligence for targeted space exploration, are all challenges that are both formative and realistic. CNES possesses many assets that enable it to extend its exploration of space towards Mars in a realistic and tangible manner. It is for this reason that it is a stakeholder in the future key missions to Mars.

In conclusion, Jean-Yves Le Gall said: “Our space programmes are progressing rapidly, enabling us to rise to the main technological and industrial challenges that we face. Firmly committed to “inventing the future of space”, CNES is proof that France plays a key role in NewSpace, innovation and the development of tomorrow’s economy.”

CONTACTS

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

Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 78 34
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