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Press Release

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Australia and France ink strategic ties towards future space cooperation

Building further on a four-decade track record of cooperation between the French space agency CNES and Australia, the two countries have engaged in an ambitious renewed partnership agenda at the 68th edition of the International Astronautical Congress being held in Adelaide from 25 to 29 September 2017.

The success last April of the emblematic PILOT astronomy mission, featuring the launch from Alice Springs of a stratospheric balloon large enough to contain Notre-Dame cathedral, represented a significant achievement of French-Australian cooperation in space. The two governments have intensified their discussions over the last two years, resulting in the recent addition of space to the scope of their reinforced strategic partnership signed in March 2017.

Adoption of a Government to Government enabling framework scheme

In this context, a letter of intent paving the way for a framework agreement was co-signed in the context of the first one to one bilateral round table on the future of space cooperation by Mr Trevor Power, Head of Sectoral Growth Policy Division at Australian Federal Ministry for Industry, Innovation and Science and Dr Jean-Yves Le Gall, President of CNES, in presence of HE Christophe Penot, Ambassador of France to Australia, and of Mrs Susan Close, SA State Minister for Education and Federal Labor Senator for the ACT Mrs Kate Lundy.

Space is a powerful driving force underpinning our security and our economies. Both France and Australia rely on world class science and technology capacities and are committed to take advantage of the space-related revolution taking place on a global scale. Both nations recognise the essential role of satellites to manage global threats, in particular their unique capacity to globally and continuously monitor climate evolution.

Agreements signed in support of France to the first Australian space mission design centre and on French participation in the Australian New Space project

The first steps towards concrete implementation have been achieved through the signature of a memorandum of understanding between CNES and UNSW on the technical support of the French space agency to the creation of the first ever Australian space mission design centre. In a very promising development, this facility can become instrumental in supporting future joint missions.

A second agreement sealed the use of CNES launch tracking capacities to deploy the private satellite constellation of FLEET, the Australian New Space flagship start-up. A specific New Space session, gathering startups around the French competitiveness Cluster Aerospace Valley, offers an unprecedented opportunity to boost interaction between French and Australian space innovation ecosystems.

Mapping of future areas of possible joint developments

The one-day bilateral meeting hosted by Defence SA and CNES saw extensive forward-looking discussions organised through a government-to-government dialogue followed by sectoral technical discussions assessing identified fields of mutual interest and exploring possible partnerships between French and Australian New Space ecosystems. Preparatory workshops allowed extensive mapping of capacities and interests on both sides and potential developments

were put forward in the areas of constellations of nanosatellites, launch vehicle technologies, space tug solutions, maritime surveillance, bushfire monitoring, and the study of ethics and history of space, coping with the fast changes encountered by the global space sector through the miniaturisation of satellites and the explosion of the use of space data for critical societal applications.

At the occasion of the signature of the three agreements, Dr Jean-Yves Le Gall declared: "Space has gained new societal importance by its critical role for climate surveillance and through the New Space revolution. This is where Australia bears its forces and capacities, hence naturally finds its place."

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