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CNES Science Planning Seminar Mid-term review

In the presence of Frédérique Vidal, Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Jean-Loup Puget, Chair of the agency's Science Programmes Committee (CPS), and CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall, CNES held a mid-term review of its Science Planning Seminar at its Head Office today in Paris. The meeting brought together all of the committees advising CNES on its science strategy—the CPS, the CERES space research and exploration committee for Universe sciences and the TOSCA committee for Earth Sciences—to conduct a status check, consider evolving science issues and gauge new opportunities. The Science Planning Seminar takes place every five years. This review comes three years after the last seminar at La Rochelle, the next one being planned for 2019, to lay plans for projects over the 2025-2035 period.

Jean-Loup Puget gave a strategic analysis of space research for the Minister, underlining the key role of fundamental research. Fabienne Casoli, CNES's Deputy Director of Innovation, Applications and Science, detailed the framework for science missions pursued through international cooperation and industrial partnerships, work with research organizations and laboratories, academia and agencies, and the role of CNES's teams developing and operating such missions. Space's strategic role in scientific research was illustrated by a presentation of rising sea level and ice melt, the discovery that Mars may have been habitable in its ancient past, the Universe viewed through the Planck cosmology mission, and the adaptation of the human body in space.

Jean-Yves Le Gall then stressed the key role of science in France's space programme, both in the fields of Universe sciences and Earth sciences. He also emphasized the seismic shifts the space sector is undergoing, driven by the NewSpace movement and emerging space nations, and how CNES is responding to this defining challenge through innovation, climate action and exploration. He commented: "Scientific projects are at the very heart of what we are doing in space and that is why they occupy such an important place in CNES's programmes. We are fortunate in France to have such a fantastic scientific community flying the flag for our space programme all over the world in so many domains, ranging from oceanography to Mars exploration and space medicine. And we are also fortunate to have the funding to match our ambitions, for which the Minister here with us today is to be most warmly thanked."

Frédérique Vidal added: "France and Europe are pursuing an ambitious space policy. Our launch vehicles and satellites are among the most capable in the world. And all these investments and all these technologies, the result of world-class research, are ultimately advancing science and knowledge. The presentations I have attended today confirm the huge scientific value of the work being conducted in space and the excellence of our public research. I am convinced of the need to maintain French and European space research at the highest level."

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