

# Press Release

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## France-Japan space cooperation CNES, JAXA and ISAS readying for MMX mission

Monday 30 October in Paris, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall met Masaki Fujimoto, Director of Solar System Sciences at the Institute of Space and Astronautical Science (ISAS), a department of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). On this occasion, French and Japanese specialists discussed projects they are working on together, notably the Martian Moons eXploration mission (MMX) for which a cooperation agreement was signed on 10 April in Tokyo by the Presidents of CNES and JAXA.

MMX is an ambitious project to return samples from Phobos, one of Mars' two moons. The mission intends to probe the moons' origins and thus gain new insights into how our solar system formed and evolved. The cooperation agreement signed in April covers phase A of the project, to which CNES will be contributing feasibility studies prior to a formal go-ahead decision. MMX is planned to launch in 2024.

Jean-Yves Le Gall and Masaki Fujimoto discussed CNES's contributions to flight dynamics and the rover to be operated on the surface of Phobos, and reviewed the organization put in place to this end. Ahead of their meeting, they paid a visit to the IAS space astrophysics institute tasked with supplying the MacrOmega hyperspectral infrared imaging instrument for MMX. JAXA's engineers are scheduled to meet CNES's engineers working on the project at the Toulouse Space Centre soon.

ISAS's visit to France provided the opportunity to review progress on ESA's Athena mission (Advanced Telescope for High ENergy Astrophysics), for which CNES and JAXA are working together on a cooling system demonstrator for the X-IFU instrument, and on Japan's LiteBIRD mission (Lite satellite for the studies of B-mode polarization and Inflation from cosmic Background Radiation), for which a French contribution is being considered.

After the meeting, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "Through our framework agreement for the MMX mission, we are stepping up our cooperation with JAXA and ISAS on solar system exploration. This very ambitious mission is addressing a number of fundamental questions for science and its results are set to leave their mark on the coming decade."

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