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EuroScience Open Forum 2018 (ESOF) How space is helping to tackle climate change

The EuroScience Open Forum 2018 (ESOF) is being held this week from Monday 9 to Saturday 14 July in Toulouse. This major professional science and innovation event was opened this year by Frédérique Vidal, France's Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science. CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall took part in the debate on tackling climate change at the opening ceremony and will also be giving a presentation on space research perspectives for planet Earth on Thursday 12 June.

Created in 2004 by the EuroScience non-profit association, ESOF brings together over 4,000 researchers, business players and policymakers from all over the world. Its media impact with the scientific community and the public at large is international. At the event's opening today, Jean-Yves Le Gall underlined the key role that Earth-observation data acquired from space are playing in tackling climate change, arguably the biggest challenge facing humankind this century. CNES is pursuing this effort through the newly formed Space Climate Observatory (SCO), an international initiative aimed at developing a global hub linking the space and scientific communities.

The role of space assets in this endeavour is threefold. First, they are enabling us to establish a diagnosis of the reality of climate change. Today, the scientific community has built up a long-term record of key parameters such as global temperature, mean sea level and concentrations of carbon gas and methane in the atmosphere. Through its emblematic missions, like the Jason satellites surveying the world's oceans and soon MicroCarb and MERLIN that will be analysing the atmosphere's composition, CNES is helping to collect irrefutable evidence of climate change. Second, it is vital that we understand and gauge the impacts of climate change from global to local scales. In this respect, satellites are able to regularly observe all parts of the globe at high resolution and with a wide field of view. CNES is supporting a broad range of work to pool data, resources and knowledge in order to characterize these impacts and model them at different scales. Third, what's needed now is the ability to take actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change and devise strategies to cope with them. For that, we need indicators and tools that citizens, businesses and local authorities must take up to promote, measure and assess our actions to protect the planet. Here, space offers the capability to acquire uniform measurements with the same sensor over long periods, irrespective of borders or politics.

On the sidelines of the opening ceremony, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "The international community is developing space technologies for a broad range of applications. Different priorities and visions of the future may coexist or even oppose one another at a given moment. But in my view, mobilizing all levels of society to secure the future for the people living on our planet and the development of life in all its diversity is the number one priority of this century."

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