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Press Release

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CNES-Ifremer cooperation Space technologies serving the oceans

Monday 15 July, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and François Houllier, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of Ifremer, the French institute of marine research, met at CNES Head Office to review the status of cooperation between the two organizations. The aim of this partnership is to foster synergies between the two organizations' missions and competencies in their respective domains of excellence under their framework agreement on space to advance knowledge of the marine environment, signed in December 2016.

Cooperation between CNES and Ifremer is rich and diverse, encompassing several Earth-observation space missions such as the French-Chinese CFOSat mission to study ocean surface winds and waves, and the French-U.S. SWOT mission devoted to surface waters and ocean topography. Management and distribution of oceanography data, notably via the ODATIS hub that promotes and facilitates their use, are also central to this partnership, while the two organizations are contributing to efforts to tackle climate change through the newly formed Space Climate Observatory (SCO), in which Ifremer is set to become a key partner in France.

The scientific community, business and the public are showing a keen interest in space advancing knowledge of the marine environment and in the oceans helping us to better understand how life formed in the universe. Efforts to preserve the oceans, the planet's main carbon sink, are employing data from numerous space programmes to monitor and model ocean variations and conditions, making 'sea and space' a strong focus of political and social actions. The CNES-Ifremer partnership is thus instrumental to accomplishing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), covering SDG 13 (Climate change) and SDG 14 (Life below water), confirming how dependent we are on in-depth knowledge of the marine environment. As a result, CNES and Ifremer regularly review the scope of their cooperation as provided for in their framework agreement, through the coordination committee formed for this purpose.

After yesterday's meeting, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall said: "CNES is strongly committed to climate-monitoring and Earth-observation missions, and attaches a great deal of importance to activities related to oceanography research, which is key to understanding climate change. The partnership between our two organizations reflects the emphasis the scientific community places on tackling climate change. I hope that in the years ahead our cooperation will become even closer to boost efforts to preserve our planet—the major challenge facing us this century."

François Houllier, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of Ifremer, added: "The oceans belong to us all and it is vital that we preserve them. It is now recognized that oceans play a key role in regulating the energy, climate and biogeochemistry balances of our Earth system. But there are still gaps in our knowledge of how the oceans are evolving in response to global climate change. Ifremer has therefore decided, through its new objectives and performance plan for 2019-2023, to pursue an ambitious scientific project to predict how the oceans will evolve between now and 2100. The renewal and strengthening of our partnership ties with CNES reflect this effort. Our future collaboration, notably through the Space Climate Observatory, illustrates the paradigm shift we are witnessing today: we can no longer content ourselves with seeking to understand what is driving climate change; we must also endeavour to measure and predict its impacts on biodiversity and populations."

About CNES

CNES (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales) is the government agency responsible for shaping France's space policy and implementing it in Europe. Its task is to conceive and orbit satellites, invent the space systems of the future and nurture new services to aid us in our daily lives. Founded in 1961, it is the initiator of major space projects, launch vehicles and satellites, and the partner of choice for industry fuelling innovation. CNES comprises some 2,500 men and women with a passion for space working to open up new and infinite fields of applications in five core areas of focus: Ariane, science, Earth observation, telecommunications and defence. It is a key player driving technology innovation, economic development and industrial policy for the nation. It also fosters scientific collaborations and has forged numerous international partnerships. France, represented by CNES, is the leading contributor to the European Space Agency (ESA).

www.cnes.fr

CONTACTS

Pascale Bresson

Press Officer

Tel: +33 (0)1 44 76 75 39

pascale.bresson@cnes.fr

Raphaël Sart

Press Officer

Tel: +33 (0)1 44 76 74 51

raphael.sart@cnes.fr

About Ifremer

Founded in 1984, Ifremer is the leading French institute working to advance knowledge of the marine environment and its resources. Since 2018, it is the operator of the French oceanographic fleet on behalf of the government for the national scientific community. It is driving concerted programmatic initiatives in France, Europe and around the world, seeking to promote sustainable development through research, technology development and innovation. These initiatives are seeking to preserve and restore the oceans, to identify and exploit marine resources for the good of human societies, and to build and share a digital ocean. For the decade ahead, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) concerning the oceans, Ifremer is making understanding and predicting how oceans will evolve by 2100 central to everything it does.

www.ifremer.fr

CONTACTS

Julie Danet

Press Officer

Tel.: +33 (0)2 98 22 46 46

presse@ifremer.fr