

Press Release

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European Space Week 2019 Europe leading the way on climate action

Wednesday 4 December, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall was in Helsinki at the European Space Week 2019 event to take part in a panel session on how space can help to strengthen Europe's position as a global leader in climate action. He spoke alongside Pierre Delsaux, Deputy Director General for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs at the European Commission, Carlo des Dorides, Executive Director of GSA, the European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency, Florence Rabier, Director General of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), and Jan Wörner, Director General of the European Space Agency (ESA).

The preparation of the COP21 conference forged a global awareness among space agencies of the role of satellites in tackling climate change. This global mobilization was translated at the time of the COP21 by the confirmation of the French-German MERLIN programme to measure emissions of methane and by the announcement of the start of the MicroCarb programme to gauge carbon dioxide emissions.

In this context, the stakes for Europe are, from an economic perspective, to take advantage of significant progress in the production of spatial data to irrigate a new sector of services, especially in the fields of tackling climate change and preserving the environment; and from an environmental perspective, to promote technical solutions that leave a smaller footprint on Earth and in space.

Europe can consolidate its historical place as a key player in space and now has a real opportunity to lead the transition towards a sustainable world. To achieve this, a sustainable space economy must match our commitments under the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Energy and Climate Strategy. The exploitation of spatial data to serve territories and businesses is also a potential source of major economic development that requires a transfer of knowledge and technologies to the market. It is essential to build on existing knowledge at local and national level and on the extraordinary tools we already have, for instance with Galileo and Copernicus, and the right stakeholders need to be brought on board from the beginning of each programme.

The Space Climate Observatory (SCO) is a concrete example of how space solutions can help to step up climate actions. It is an international observatory leveraging satellite data to understand and measure the impacts of climate change, with a view to establishing impact scenarios, projections of how territories are likely to evolve and their consequences on populations. Based on pooling existing data from international and particularly European programmes, the SCO will ensure interoperability with local socio-economic data to provide decision-makers with an accurate analysis of the vulnerability of their territory to climate change. This unique initiative is thus providing concrete support to territories.

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