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PROSPECTS FOR SPACE IN 2020 SEMINAR AN AMBITIOUS FRENCH SPACE PROGRAMME FOR THE POST-NEWSPACE ERA

Thursday 20 February, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall was at the Prospects for Space in 2020 seminar organized by Euroconsult and GIFAS, the French aerospace industries association, where the day's proceedings were opened by Frédérique Vidal, Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation. In his introductory remarks, CNES's President recalled that this year marks a turning point for the agency as it gears up for the post-NewSpace era, buoyed by rising space budgets in Europe and France and by renewed government interest in space exploration, as illustrated in the continuing emergence of new space powers, the accomplishments of many international partnerships and increased funding for the space sector.

Space should be approached from a broad perspective. The downstream applications that space serves would not exist without the launchers, satellites and technologies developed upstream. As a result, the perceived separation between public and private initiatives is largely meaningless, for without massive public investment there would be nothing for the private sector to invest in, as each feeds off the other. The €100 million raised to launch the KINEIS constellation of 25 nanosatellites dedicated to the Internet of Things (IoT) this year is a perfect illustration. Such an exceptional injection of funding was made possible by government agencies like CNES and Ifremer, the French institute of marine research and exploration, financed by public banks and private investors and structured by the sector's giants and SMEs.

Space is an ambition that France has been pursuing for nearly 60 years. Besides historic space programmes in the domains of science and defence, space is a key driver of economic, social and environmental development. With new applications now being opened up, the Connect by CNES programme is supporting and federating the space user community in Europe and around the world, chiefly in sectors that are going to prove crucial to our future, such as the environment, healthcare and mobility.

Fifty years ago, mankind set foot on the Moon. This emblematic event still enshrines today the passion and dreams that guide the people who every day are making the space adventure a reality. The 1960s may be long behind us, but new promises are emerging. France is all set to take part in the United States' Artemis endeavour and in China's Chang'e programme, as well as the ExoMars and Mars 2020 missions departing this summer in search of new clues about our origins.

Concluding his talk, Jean-Yves Le Gall said: "France is and will remain a major space power. This belief is based on the successful work being done by 'space team' France, combining the efforts of universities, research laboratories, government agencies, big manufacturers and start-ups to sustain a solid national programme and a strong European space effort."

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