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FRANCE-JAPAN SPACE COOPERATION BROAD STATUS REVIEW OF PROJECTS

Thursday 22 October, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and Hiroshi Yamakawa, President of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), held a videoconference meeting to review bilateral space cooperation.

The virtual meeting covered the two nations' contributions to a number of solar system exploration missions. CNES will be working alongside JAXA to analyse samples from asteroid Ryugu that the Hayabusa-2 probe is set to bring back to Earth on 5 December. CNES engineers and research scientists from the IAS space astrophysics institute are awaited at JAXA's Extraterrestrial Sample Curation Center (ESCuC), where the first analyses will be performed as soon as the samples arrive.

The two agency heads also noted the good progress made by French contributions to Japan's ambitious Martian Moons Exploration (MMX) mission to bring back samples from Phobos, one of Mars' moons.

At JAXA's invitation, CNES could also be taking part in Japan's LiteBIRD space observatory to study the polarization of the cosmic microwave background (CMB), for which it would lead development by a European consortium of the Medium-High Frequency Telescope (MHFT), the satellite's main instrument.

CNES's President also underlined the interest of the agency and the French scientific community in contributing, at JAXA's request, to the Solar-C solar physics mission led by JAXA and the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ).

The two agency heads then hailed the good progress of the Callisto reusable launcher demonstrator developed by CNES, JAXA and the German space agency DLR.

Lastly, Jean-Yves Le Gall and Hiroshi Yamakawa discussed the third meeting of the France-Japan space dialogue scheduled to take place next year in France to advance all areas of cooperation. They concluded by hailing the excellent collaboration between the two agencies and committing to sustain its momentum despite the complex health situation.

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