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PRESS RELEASE

**HIGH-SCHOOL PUPILS READY TO EMBARK ON A SCIENCE ADVENTURE
WITH STÉPHANE LÉVIN**

The latest reports compiled from field data and Earth observation satellites are a wake-up call signalling the threats now weighing on the environment, climate and biodiversity, as well as highlighting the melting of sea ice, desertification and deforestation.

Three years after his Polar Night mission dedicated to scientific research and human spaceflight, French explorer Stéphane Lévin is organizing an educational project for 2006-2008 focusing on a topical and sensitive environmental issue: global warming.

Called *Voyageurs des Sciences* (Science Travellers), the project will see Stéphane Lévin taking 18 pupils from high schools in the Toulouse area with him on three exceptional adventures in environments that are undergoing dramatic shifts: *Voyageurs des glaces* (Ice travellers) in the Arctic in 2006; *Voyageurs des sables* (Sand travellers) in the Sahara in 2007; and *Voyageurs des fleuves* (River travellers) in French Guiana in 2008.

After five months of preparation, the first expedition will spend from 27 April to 12 May 2006 in Nunavut, in the Arctic far north of Canada. Six adventurers trained by Stéphane will learn how to live, find their way, fish, build igloos and drive dog sleds with the Inuit people, as well as perform science experiments devised and developed by the project's partners.

Designed to encourage youngsters to take up science subjects and to raise public awareness of the threats facing our planet, this project will benefit from the latest advances in space research and its practical applications in the public domain.

The project is concentrating on communicating knowledge and developing a science and engineering culture. By broadening youngsters' skills, proposing multidisciplinary learning strategies and offering them a formative, enriching experience, it will:

- teach them about key environmental issues by getting them to do hands-on work, on their own and in groups;

- nurture a sense of civic responsibility in young eco-citizens, who are the life blood and decision-makers of the future;
- train them and take them on a real-life expedition, where they will share unique moments with their classmates and schools living among the Inuit, Tuareg and Indian peoples;
- get them to perform science protocols and experiments in exceptional environments, and gauge the utility of space technologies;
- not only give them an experience to remember and recount to others, but also produce “useful” results.

Nine partners have joined the project:

Funding support:

Infoterra, CNES, Caisse d'Epargne Midi Pyrénées, the Cité de l'espace (Toulouse) and the City of Toulouse.

Science and engineering support:

- CNES is providing a protocol to acquire in-situ measurements as part of the joint NASA/CNES GLOBE/CALISPH'AIR educational project (Global Observation for a Better Environment) and test a telemedicine kit in an extreme environment, in partnership with the MEDES space clinic.
- EADS Astrium is providing a new satellite audio and video communication system, and an SMS transmission and geolocation system.
- the Hydrosolab laboratory has designed and set up three protocols to acquire samples of ice, sediments, soils and so on from the three environments, for analysis in the field and later in the laboratory.
- CLS is testing the ability to power transmitters off solar panels in an extreme environment. The adventurers' position will be tracked by an adventure transmitter and visualized on a website. For the 2007 and 2008 expeditions, new transmitters will be tested with the first Argos 3 instrument on the METOP satellite.
- The Midi-Pyrénées sports medicine society is doing tests and full hospital check-ups on the 18 adventurers, before and after the three expeditions.

Logistic support:

The Cité de l'espace is reaffirming its position as a key regional education partner, providing the public with the most comprehensive information on the project, from initial preparations with the young adventurers to their return. It will be organizing special events to mark key project milestones, setting up an exhibition area, providing a press and tracking centre, and relaying information to schools.

French astronaut Philippe Perrin, who flew on the STS-11 space shuttle mission in June 2002, is the project's patron.

This great adventure will be broadcast daily via latest-generation satellite communication systems to the Cité de l'espace in Toulouse. The project partners will also be giving it a high profile with their employees and customers.

Stéphane Lévin and the project partners will present the Voyageurs des Sciences programme at a press conference at the Cité de l'espace, Thursday 16 February at 10.30 a.m.

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