CENTRE NATIONAL D'ÉTUDES SPATIALES

Paris, 26 January 2006
PR 007-2006

PRESS RELEASE

ARGONAUTICA 2006 GETS UNDERWAY

Sailors in Antarctica have teamed with CNES and youngsters around the world to study ocean currents and the migration routes of animals. The boats are en route and have released the first Argos transmitter buoys; which can be tracked on CNES's education site at www.cnes-edu.org.

CNES's Argonautica programme provides teachers with a range of learning resources to show how satellites are helping us to study the oceans. Materials include a teaching kit with maps for tracking ocean yacht races, suggestions for classwork and CD-ROMs; monthly on-line thematic features; and **meetings organized by CNES between classes, race skippers and scientists using satellite data**.

This year, Argonautica is focusing on Antarctica to underline the fundamental role that the poles play in Earth's climate system. Antarctica acts as an important climate "buffer" that prevents the globe from warming too rapidly, while the southern ocean surrounding it is a key element driving global ocean circulation. Today, shifting patterns due to climate change in the polar regions—particularly ocean variations—are still poorly understood.

After partnering the Vendée Globe round-the-world yacht race last year, Argonautica 2006 will give youngsters the opportunity to learn more about the oceans and study migration patterns of king penguins and elephant seals being tracked with Argos transmitters by scientists at the Chizé biology research centre (CEBC/CNRS) in France. All data can be accessed by clicking on the Argonautica pictogram on the home page of the CNES education website at www.cnes-edu.org.

This year's operation is tracking three marine expeditions: *Ada 2*, *Polarstern* and *Amro*.

News from sailors, buoys and boats

Isabelle Autissier and Erik Orsenna, who set sail from Ushuaia on their yacht ***Ada 2*** on 5 January to retrace the routes of some early Antarctic explorers, including Jean-Baptiste Charcot and Sir Ernest Shackleton, have arrived at Elephant Island. They released the buoys ADA and LILA on 11 January, the latter built by pupils at the Lycée International de Los Angeles, U.S.A.

The scientific team on the German icebreaker ***Polarstern*** set out from Punta Arena on 14 January to study the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, in the Drake Passage. The team has already released a first buoy called Malouines in the Falkland Current. It will release another called Polar this week, and a third constructed by pupils at the Lycée Pilote Innovant de Poitiers, France.

Sydney Gaviniet recently completed the Cape Town to Melbourne second leg of the Volvo Ocean Race, in which he is competing on ***Amro***. He released the buoy Doisneau on 5 January.

All the data collected by youngsters taking part in the operation will raise their awareness of climate change issues and, from a broader perspective, give them a first taste of the mythical Antarctic continent.

Quick facts

Argonautica 2004/2005 teamed with the Vendée Globe round-the-world yacht race, focusing on the same themes as this year.

Space education *is a core element of CNES's outreach policy, led by its Space Culture office. This effort is geared toward:*

- *developing tools for hands-on learning through an experiment-based approach*
- *organizing and leading operations in partnership with non-profit associations*
- *training science teachers and communicators*
- *producing and co-producing materials about space science and technologies*

Argos *is a global, satellite-based environmental data collection and location system accomplished jointly by Canada, France, Russia and the United States. In service since 1978, Argos is operated by CNES subsidiary CLS. CNES oversees the system's development and supplies Argos instruments to operating agencies (NOAA, NASDA and Eumetsat).*

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