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## PRESS RELEASE

### SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF ATLANTIS

Yannick d'Escatha, the President of CNES, the French Space Agency, "warmly congratulates the teams from NASA for the successful launch today of the shuttle Atlantis, from NASA's Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral in Florida.

I particularly acknowledge the astronauts that are currently onboard the shuttle heading towards the International Space Station, especially the two Europeans Hans Schlegel, a German astronaut, and Léopold Eyharts, a French astronaut.

NASA has given a mission to Mr. Eyharts: to setup, activate and verify the correct working condition of ESA's Columbus laboratory and its experiment modules. This is a superb challenge that CNES is very proud of, since we chose and recruited Léopold in 1985.

In the name of all my colleagues at CNES, I warmly thank Léopold for the remarkable work carried out during his long years of training. I congratulate him on the professionalism that is now helping to show the world that Europe's know-how can stand alongside that of the United States. ESA's Columbus laboratory is the key part of Europe's contribution to this great international project, the ISS. The launch of the ATV cargo, whose control centre is under CNES responsibility in Toulouse, will be the next step.

Through its participation in ESA's programmes, France will be an active partner in the exploitation and the utilisation of the European module of the ISS. With its CADMOS teams, CNES is ready to exploit the experiments onboard the station that it has been entrusted with.

Once more, thank you and congratulations to all."

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