



Paris, 6 November 2013  
PR085 - 2013

**Press release**

## **ASI and CNES sign cooperation agreement on experiments for ESA's BepiColombo mission**

**Enrico Saggese, President of the Italian space agency ASI, and CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall signed a cooperation agreement on experiments for the BepiColombo mission to Mercury, part of ESA's Cosmic Vision programme.**

Pursuing their longstanding and very complementary partnership, ASI and CNES have signed an agreement to supply the French PHEBUS instrument (Probing Hermean Exosphere by Ultraviolet Spectroscopy) and the SIMBIO-SYS instrument suite (Spectrometers and Imagers for MPO BepiColombo Integrated Observatory System) under ASI responsibility for the mission.

Scheduled to launch in 2017 on Ariane 5, the BepiColombo mission comprises two orbiters: the Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO) to study the planet's magnetic field and magnetosphere, and the Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) to study its surface and inner composition. It is on MPO that PHEBUS and SIMBIO-SYS will be flown.

PHEBUS is a spectrometer designed to map the ultraviolet spectrum of Mercury's exosphere, while the SIMBIO-SYS suite, which comprises an infrared spectrometer and high-resolution stereo cameras, will aim to map the planet's mineral composition.

For PHEBUS, CNES is supplying ESA with the instrument built in partnership with Italy, Japan and Russia, with support for its role as prime contractor from the LATMOS atmospheres, environments and space observations laboratory. ASI is providing CNES with calibration facilities and helping CNES with instrument calibration.

For SIMBIO-SYS, CNES will supply to the Italian prime contractor the Main Electronics unit (ME), which handles the command-and-control interface with MPO, and the Proximity Electronics (PE) for the VIHI infrared imager. It will also assist prime contractors the IAS space astrophysics institute and the LESIA space and astrophysics instrumentation research laboratory with the ME and VIHI instrument deliverables, assist IAS with ground calibration of SIMBIO-SYS and provide funding for subsequent industrial activities. ASI is supplying ESA with the SYMBIO-SYS instrument suite and acting as prime contractor for VIHI's PE and ME units. ASI also supports the scientific activities conducted by the Italian universities and research institutes.

**More about the BepiColombo mission at:**

**<http://smc.cnes.fr/BEPICOLOMBO/>**

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