

CNES and China National Space Administration (CNSA) strengthen cooperative ties

CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and Xu Dazhe, Administrator of the China National Space Administration (CNSA), signed an agreement Wednesday 26 March aimed at achieving closer cooperation between France and China in oceanography and astrophysics. The signing took place in the presence of President François Hollande and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

The agreement signed today sets out the terms governing cooperation between France and China in oceanography and astrophysics through the joint development of the CFOSAT satellite to study ocean surface wind and waves and the SVOM satellite to study gamma-ray bursts.

CFOSAT (China-France Oceanography SATellite) is a science mission designed to study ocean surface wind and wave conditions with a view to improving forecasts for marine meteorology and knowledge of climate variability. CFOSAT will carry two main instruments: SWIM (Surface Waves Investigation and Monitoring), a wave scatterometer supplied by CNES, and SCAT, a wind-field scatterometer supplied by CNSA. The satellite is scheduled to be orbited in 2018 by a Chinese launcher.

SVOM (Space Variable Objects Monitor) is an astronomy mission that aims chiefly to observe and characterize gamma-ray bursts, the highest-energy phenomena in the Universe. France will provide the ECLAIRs burst-detection instrument and the ground alerting network. The exact sharing of responsibilities between France and China will be decided in June with a view to orbiting the satellite on a Chinese launcher no earlier than 2020.

CNES and CNSA will also work to optimize the use of data and scientific applications derived from these two missions in the fields of ocean resource monitoring, disaster management and exploration of the Universe.

Commenting on the agreement, Jean-Yves Le Gall said: "France is very keen to work in space with China, whose engineers and scientists are unquestionably some of the best in the world. The boost given today to the CFOSAT and SVOM missions paves the way for closer cooperative ties likely to lead to new joint projects in the future, pursued either directly by CNES or through the European Space Agency (ESA), to which France is the main contributor."

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