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CNES and CEA sign new framework research agreement

Tuesday 6 January, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and Bernard Bigot, Administrator General of CEA, the French atomic energy and alternative energies commission, signed a new framework research agreement to step up cooperation between the two agencies in science and technology.

The five-year agreement, which follows on from a previous accord signed in 2004, will prolong the close collaboration undertaken between the two agencies over more than 50 years in astrophysics, during which they have achieved fine results on missions like the Herschel space telescope. This success will now be pursued through their involvement in major astrophysics missions like SVOM, EUCLID and Athena, as well as in Earth observation with MERLIN.

The priority fields of research covered by the new agreement concern astrophysics, climate and environmental sciences, fluid physics, radiobiology and life sciences. CNES and CEA have also identified 20 more technology areas of joint interest, such as nanotechnologies, cryogenics, optoelectronics, new materials and modelling.

To stimulate infusion of these technologies, CEA will study ways of space-rating developments originally designed for civil applications and give CNES privileged access to its R&D platforms. CNES will fulfil the role of system prime contractor for programmes matching the needs of the scientific community. To facilitate sharing of knowledge and skills, the two agencies will establish joint competency centres and training actions, and set up a steering committee to review progress on current missions every six months.

Commenting on this latest research agreement, Jean-Yves Le Gall said: "CNES is delighted to have signed this new agreement with CEA that will inject fresh momentum into our longstanding and highly successful cooperation, offering significant benefits to France's industry and scientific community. I am very pleased to see our two agencies moving forward together in this way."

Bernard Bigot said: "CNES and CEA share the great goal of making our national industry more competitive and we hope this new agreement will help us to achieve that. In particular, it should enable us to identify the most promising technologies developed by CEA at a very early stage and thus encourage their rapid integration in the major space missions to which CNES contributes."

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