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CNES and China National Space Administration (CNSA) sign formal cooperation agreement on CFOSAT ocean-observing mission

Thursday 29 January, on the occasion of the French Prime Minister's official visit to China, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and Xu Dazhe, Administrator of the China National Space Administration (CNSA), signed an agreement to step up the schedule for the CFOSAT (China-France Oceanography SATellite) ocean-observing mission. The signing ceremony was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, in the presence of the Prime Minister and his Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang.

This agreement ties into the broader accord signed by CNES and CNSA on 26 March 2014 on the occasion of the state visit to Paris of Xi Jinping, the President of the Chinese People's Republic, aimed at achieving closer cooperation between France and China in oceanography and astrophysics.

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 no later than June 2018 by a Chinese launcher.

The new agreement is intended to expedite implementation of the CFOSAT mission. It also lays the foundations for a future accord on exploitation of the mission's science data and derived applications, putting the emphasis on promoting them within the international scientific community to optimize utilization of SWIM and SCAT data.

After the signing, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "This new agreement illustrates our joint commitment to pursuing closer cooperative ties in space, through which, I am delighted to say, we will benefit from the world-renowned scientific expertise of our Chinese partners. The accord will give new momentum to CFOSAT, which is set to make a key contribution to efforts to gain deeper insight into the processes driving climate change that will be the focus of the COP21 global climate summit in Paris next December."

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