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U.S. and France Sign Agreements for Civil Space Cooperation

WASHINGTON -- NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and French Space Agency President Yannick d'Escatha signed four agreements in support of U.S. and French space cooperation during a ceremony Thursday at NASA Headquarters in Washington.

"The French Space Agency has a long history of participating with NASA in Earth and space science missions," Bolden said. "I am pleased to see this cooperation expand as we look to further engage the international community in exploring space."

The Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales, or CNES, is the French government agency responsible for shaping and implementing the country's space policy in Europe. It was founded in 1961 and headquartered in Paris. The CNES mission is to invent future space systems, bring space technologies to maturity and guarantee France's independent access to space.

The agreements involve missions in NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington. They are:

- A Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution mission scheduled to launch in 2013. This NASA-led project will provide the first direct measurements to address key scientific questions about the evolution of the red planet. CNES will provide the Solar Wind Electron Analyzer sensor to measure solar wind and ionospheric electrons.
- A Magnetospheric MultiScale mission scheduled to launch in 2014. This is a NASA-led, four spacecraft project. It will make measurements to help explain the fundamental physical processes involved with magnetic reconnection, particle acceleration and turbulence on both the micro and meso scales in the Earth's magnetosphere. CNES will provide portions of the instrument suite for the investigation.
- A Convection Rotation and Planetary Transits mission launched in December 2006. The project is led by CNES in conjunction with the European Space Agency and other international partners. The agreement involves participation by U.S. scientists in the data analysis of planetary observations in return for NASA time for follow-up ground observations by the Keck telescope in Mauna Kea in Hawaii.
- A Surface Water and Ocean Topography mission for the study and definition of potential cooperation on this Earth Science Decadal Survey mission. The project could give scientists the first comprehensive view of Earth's freshwater bodies from space and more detailed measurements of the ocean surface than ever before, thereby enabling improved water management and climate predictions.

NASA's Science Mission Directorate engages the nation's science community, sponsors scientific research and develops and deploys satellites and probes in collaboration with NASA's international partners to answer fundamental questions requiring a view from and into space.

The directorate studies Earth as a planet, explores the planetary bodies of our solar system, studies the sun and its influence throughout the solar system, and scans the universe to gauge its expanse while searching for Earth-like planets.

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