

News story: UK-France space co-operation at Sandhurst Summit

Artist's impression of the ExoMars rover. Credit: ESA.

The statement focuses on projects for climate action, Mars exploration, space applications and Europe's space programme.

Since the signature of the Brize Norton framework arrangement on 31 January 2014, French-UK space co-operation has achieved many things, notably in the fields of Earth observation and climate action. For example, the UK Space Agency is working with CNES to develop the IASI-NG (Infrared Atmospheric Sounding Interferometer New Generation) instrument for Eumetsat's programme to improve weather forecasts.

An agreement has also been signed to enable the UK space Agency to participate in CNES's contribution to the SWOT (Surface Water & Ocean Topography) mission being pursued jointly with NASA. France and the United Kingdom are also teaming on the MicroCarb programme to monitor and map sources and sinks of carbon gases.

The statement signed today proposes to step up co-operation in space between France and the United Kingdom.

Alice Bunn, Director of International at the UK Space Agency, said:

The UK and France play leading roles in global efforts to explore the solar system and use satellite technologies to improve life on Earth. From missions to Mars to cutting-edge climate measurements from space, we want to build on the successful history of close collaboration for the benefit of both our nations.

Jean-Yves Le Gall, President of CNES, said:

Since the signature of the Brize Norton framework arrangement, space cooperation between France and the United Kingdom has gone from strength to strength. The statement signed today is set to consolidate and extend our collaboration, in particular our joint efforts to tackle climate change through the IASI-NG, SWOT and MicroCarb projects.

Closer cooperation will notably cover work on climate science and space systems in support of the implementation of a Space Climate Observatory (SCO), set out in the Paris Declaration adopted by the world's heads of space agencies at the One Planet Summit.

A future partnership between the two nations on Mars exploration is also under consideration for technology developments in autonomous navigation of the ExoMars mission rover.

In the field of applications and innovations leveraging space data and technologies, CNES and the UK Space Agency are keen to nurture space hubs and ecosystems that will help to support humanitarian relief efforts around the globe in response to the increasing number of natural disasters being fuelled by climate change.

The two nations feel that technical and scientific exchanges should continue in order to further explore areas of possible future cooperation.