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ESA Council meeting at ministerial level

Naples (Italy), 20/21 November 2012

At the Council meeting at ministerial level of the European Space Agency ESA that took place on 20/21 November 2012 in Naples (Italy), ESA Member States decided to start and continue more than 30 programmes. Important decisions were taken concerning the future of the European launcher Ariane, the European participation in the exploitation of the International Space Station ISS, and the evolution of ESA including the further development of the relations between ESA and the European Union. The meeting was co-chaired by the ministers of Switzerland and Luxemburg, Mauro Dell'Ambrogio and François Biltgen, who will assume the ESA co-presidency at ministerial level for the next three years.

In total Ministers engaged an amount of more than 10 Billion Euros for ESA's various activities and programmes, among them the future of Ariane and the ISS but also the development of the second generation of European polar orbiting meteorological satellites in cooperation with Eumetsat and a new generation of telecommunication satellites, including a new platform and electric propulsion. Taking into account the current economic situation in Europe, the results of the Naples meeting underline the attractiveness of ESA and its programmes as a means to boost growth and competitiveness. ESA's attractiveness is further underlined by the growing number of Member States: Poland formally joined the Agency as its 20th member state on 19 November 2012.

The budget for the science programme and the basic activities of ESA (the "level of resources") will be kept constant for the next three years, without compensation of inflation. Thanks to the accession of Romania and Poland, the funding level for the science programme will slightly increase. Concerning the PRODEX programme, Switzerland made substantial subscriptions in order to allow the possible continuation of on-going activities and the start of new projects.

After long and difficult discussions concerning the future of Ariane, a solution was found that was acceptable to both France and Germany. Investments for the detailed definition studies of the new launcher Ariane 6 and for the continuation of the development of Ariane 5 ME adapted were secured, with a third sub-envelope for a common upper stage to develop as many commonalities as possible between the two developments. These activities are funded for two years with a decision on the continuation of both launchers developments to be taken in 2014. Furthermore, the resolution for the funding of the Centre Spatial Guyanais (CSG), the launchers exploitation and accompaniment programme

for Ariane and Vega (LEAP), the evolution of VEGA (VECEP) and the Re-usable In-orbit Demonstrator for Europe (PRIDE) have been subscribed. Swiss subscriptions to these programmes provide the conditions for a continued strong role of Swiss industry, in particular in the future Ariane launcher.

Concerning Earth observation, decisions were taken for period 4 of the Earth Observation Envelope Programme (EOEP-4), for the development of the second generation polar orbiting meteorological satellites (MetOp-SG), and for a further segment of the GMES Space Component programme (GSC-3). Since EOEP-4 was not subscribed at the envisaged level, development of future EarthExplorer missions will likely be delayed. However, Swiss subscriptions to all three programmes mentioned will allow all Swiss actors both from academia and industry to participate in relevant activities.

In the human spaceflight and robotic exploration sector, the further exploitation of the International Space Station ISS has been secured after long negotiations, with the participation of UK as a new actor in this sector and a strong commitment by Switzerland. Part of it is the start of ESA activities to provide - as a barter - the service module for NASA's new Orion Multipurpose Crew Vehicle (the MPCV-SM), following the launch of ATV-5 in order to offset the European share in the common system operation costs of the ISS. Swiss actors are well-placed to play a strong role like for the ATVs. Moreover, the 4th period of the European Programme for Life and Physical Sciences in Space (ELIPS-4), including some technology elements, and a new Mars Robotic Exploration programme were also decided. The last one should prepare the next steps after the ESA ExoMars programme which has been consolidated through an agreement between ESA and Roscosmos.

In the telecommunications sector, the generic lines ARTES 3-4 and ARTES 5 have been continued. Switzerland continues to make this sector a priority and contributed to the start of new ARTES lines for a new satellite platform (NEOSat = ARTES 14), electric propulsion (Partner-Electra = ARTES 33) as well as for additional application and/or service oriented activities be it through integrated applications (IAP = ARTES 20) or for maritime surveillance (AIS = ARTES 21).

In addition to the above mentioned major programme families, a continuation of the General Support Technology Programme (GSTP-6), the European GNSS Evolution Programme, and the SSA space weather and NEO activities (with the extension in parallel of some SST activities) were decided. Furthermore, a framework for the Small Mission Initiative (SMI) was put in place to set up a programme in 2013. As a specific and dedicated support to innovation, Switzerland participates in all of these programmes and initiatives.

The total of Switzerland's new commitments to the various activities and programmes amounts to more than 400 Mio CHF. This engagement will allow for a continuation of R&D and industrial activities at the edge of innovation, consolidating existing niches and setting the framework for new ones, at a similar level as in previous years, in line with the decisions of the Swiss Parliament and the Federal Council.

On the political level, it is worth mentioning the adoption of a Declaration "Towards the European Space Agency that best serves Europe" concerning the evolution of ESA, which starts a process aiming to achieve coherence and complementarity of European space activities and actions, in particular between ESA and the European Union.

According to current planning, a next Ministerial conference will be held in 2014, where complementary decisions for the ISS and future launcher developments should be taken, and ESA's evolution process examined. The next subsequent Council at ministerial level, defining the level of resources, is foreseen in 2015.

Swiss participation to ESA programmes gives access to all Swiss actors to data and results, but above all to procurements. For more information, please see the corresponding ESA web page (<http://emits.esa.int>). The Swiss Space Office (SSO) is at your disposal for any further information and your point of contact to help you to make this ESA success in Naples a full Swiss success in the next years!