

FLASH REPORT 4

European leaders charter course for space

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French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed their views on space matters on 11 and 14 February 2008, respectively. Those two countries have over the past decades invested around 45% of the European space effort and continue to be the key to any new impetus in this sector. What do their interventions bode for space?

The first remark is to distinguish the different nature of the two speeches: for the French President this was a policy statement¹ whereas the German Chancellor, had a discussion² with the STS 122 crew and more particularly with European astronauts Klaus Schlegel from Germany and Leopold Eyharts from France, while commissioning the Columbus module.

France's space ambition for Europe

The visit that took place in French Guiana provided the opportunity for touring the facilities of the Guiana Space Centre – the European Space port. In addition to several French Ministers – Interior, Justice, Defence, Research, Overseas Departments and Territories, Environment and Sustainable Development (Junior Minister), Foreign Affairs (Junior Minister), the European Commission was represented by one of its vice President, Jacques Barrot, and the space community by Heads of Agencies from France – Yannick d'Escatha, Germany – Johann-Dietrich Wörner, Italy – Giovanni F. Bignami, Russia – Anatoly Perminov, and ESA's DG Jean-Jacques Dordain as well as by Jean-Yves Le Gall, CEO of Arianespace, Francois Auque, CEO of EADS Astrium, Pascale Sourisse, CEO of Thales Alenia Space among others.

¹http://www.elysee.fr/documents/index.php?mode=cvview&press_id=1030&cat_id=7&lang=fr

²http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/nn_5296/Content/DE/Rede/2008/02/2008-02-14-iss-columbus-rede-bk.html

The French President recalled:

- The vision laid out by General de Gaulle on the creation of CNES and subsequently of the Guiana Space Centre; those decisions made possible exceptional collective successes within the European co-operation framework of ESA; space vectors were and still are an indispensable part of supremacy as well as a mark of national prestige and industrial/technological power;
- John-Fitzgerald Kennedy's wish to have space as an instrument of knowledge and understanding rather than a bellicose tool, a wish echoed by ESA's founding fathers in the Agency's Convention and illustrated i.a. by the launch of Columbus;
- The three pillars of Europe's strategic independence i.e. access to space, exploration and applications;
- The role of applications such as Earth observation or weather forecasting in citizens' everyday life and for understanding and mitigating the effects of climate change; the contribution of radio-communications is also considered as essential;
- Space's contribution to intelligence gathering and to national and international security;
- Europe 70% share of the accessible launch market with Ariane 5 and the economic weight in terms of employment and revenue generated by space;
- In the perspective of the forthcoming French Presidency of the European Union's Council, the necessary ambition for space joint endeavours appears mandatory, and the next session of ESA Council at Ministerial level is

regarded as a milestone to move forward and bring the required changes to the current status (even though no hint were given as to where those changes are most needed);

- The impetus given by the German Presidency in reaching a consensus on the European Space Policy³ and the consequences of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty – due for January 2009 – with regard to art. 4.3 and 189 making of space an area of shared competence;

“Space in the future Treaty”

ARTICLE 4.3 / In the areas of research, technological development and space, the Union shall have competence to carry out activities, in particular to define and implement programmes; however, the exercise of that competence shall not result in Member States being prevented from exercising theirs.

ARTICLE 189 / 1. To promote scientific and technical progress, industrial competitiveness and the implementation of its policies, the Union shall draw up a European space Policy. To this end, it may promote joint initiatives, support research and technological development and coordinate the efforts needed for the exploration and exploitation of space.

2. To contribute to attaining the objectives referred to in paragraph 1., the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall establish the necessary measures, which may take the form of a European space programme, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States.

3. The Union shall establish any appropriate relations with the European Space Agency.

4. This Article shall be without prejudice to the other provisions of this Title.”

- That the Union should take the lead in becoming a full-fledged space actor and the implementation of Galileo and GMES are seen as key indicators of Europe’s credibility; ESA’s support is seen as essential for Galileo and clear organization and funding schemes are paramount for GMES;
- New initiatives are expected particularly on space’s contribution to climate change and on space surveillance giving explicit support to ESA’s proposal in that regard; it is worth noting that unhindered access to space should be guaranteed alongside with the immunity of satellites and that the legitimate right to self defence of States should be

respected; (the latter being very similar to the United States doctrine enunciated by President George W. Bush in 2006, it remains unclear whether France will submit those confidence building measures to the Conference on Disarmament or to COPUOS and if a common European position will be sought and obtained in Council prior to submission; moreover, taking into account Europe’s capabilities, how to exert Europe self defence rights and on which – ground or space – infrastructures?);

- Evolution is required from the main stakeholders: the European Union and the Commission should be more coherent and effective, and ESA keep its flexibility while encouraging greater industrial competition in carrying out its programmes;
- Kourou -Guyana Space Centre- should be more than a French facility made available to ESA, to become a key strategic infrastructure of the Union, (funded on EU’s budget currently ESA bears around 65% of Kourou’s fixed expenditures);
- Space exploration and science, launchers and space for defence are the three priorities of France’s action, when required in co-operation with other government partners; this is particularly true for **exploration** where a shared vision and a common project are to be developed with the United States associating any credible partner on technical and financial merits; regarding **launchers** the reliability and performance of Ariane 5 were recognized as well as the need for new developments, even though in a few years, (an approach deemed insufficient and risky by industrial primes) and the success of Vega and Soyuz are expected to provide for a complete array of mass and orbits to be offered by Arianespace from Kourou; the **defence sector**, where the effort comes primarily from four countries, - France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom -, should as far as France is concerned witness a significant increase in the next Defence Programme Law (from around 700 Millions Euros in 2004 the yearly expenditure has dwindled to 350 Millions Euros in 2007-2008; a 2007 report “Let us make more Space for our Defence”⁴ commissioned by the French Ministry of Defence advocated a significant increase in expenditures though the figures were not released).

This speech integrates the various and coordinated contributions from several Departments: Research and Defence, both exerting the supervision of CNES, Interior for risk management, Environment and Sustainable

³http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/space/doc_pdf/esp_comm7_0212_en.pdf
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/94166.pdf

⁴http://www.defense.gouv.fr/defense_uk/focus/donnons_plus_d_espace_a_la_defense_1

Development, Foreign Affairs and Finance. It appears as the first element, a precursor, of a position statement on France's space ambitions for her national programme and for Europe on the occasion of the next French EU Council Presidency. This speech will take its full meaning when complemented, in due course, by time and budgetary commitments, probably at ministerial level. CNES budget stability was reaffirmed, though no real growth took place since 2004, and expectations are high to see a significant increase in Ministry of Defence space-related spending.

Starting the implementation of the various proposals should be witnessed in the coming weeks for 2008 to be regarded as a vintage year. Resuming consideration of evolution of Ariane 5 in a few years time could present the risk of no longer having the current level of experience/expertise in the work force. The active role of *Groupe Parlementaire Espace*, a joint gathering of both houses – Assemblée Nationale and Sénat – and the 2007 report⁵ "Space Policy: daring or decline" were not mentioned, though it contained interesting observations and recommendations.

A German perspective

In her address Chancellor Merkel expressed her satisfaction at once again meeting on familiar terms the space community; since her assumption of duties she used multiple opportunities to visit ESOC/EAC, ILA-Berlin or industrial sites. She, thus, has established a personal relation with this sector and its main actors. In addition to putting her weight behind the adoption of the European Space policy the German presidency (January-June 2007) led to the adoption of the Munich road map on GMES⁶.

She showed concern with the necessity to attract young people to embrace engineering professions and mentioned her willingness for creating a favourable environment.

After mentioning President Sarkozy's intervention, she stressed that fundamental and applied research requires vision and patience as well as believing in the future in spite of a greying Europe, demography wise. This decline highlights the "relative" importance of Europe and the only path is through innovation, research and creativity to avoid a fossilization of the continent. Europe should not follow but take the lead;

⁵ OPECST: Parliamentary Office for Scientific and Technological Assessment.
<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/rap-info/i3676-english.pdf>

⁶<http://www.bmvbs.de/en/dokumente/1872.991969/Artikel/dokument.htm>

Germany proved her commitment with the major share in funding Europe's contribution to ISS and will continue to show such willingness if necessary.

The co-operative nature of space activities was highlighted and national interests should be put aside. Her satisfaction at Columbus or at the role that Bremen played for the ATV was visible but equally strong was her "gentle warning" on Galileo. The difficulties of the past have led to delays; a clear appeal was made as to the necessity for all concerned players to report any obstacle for prompt decisions at the political level, and when needed directly to the Head of Government.

It is worth noting that the definition and implementation of space policy matters in Germany enjoy the broadest possible support in the *Bundestag* where the Air and Space group is particularly active.

Looking ahead

This year 2008 appears particularly important and critical in many respects. How to make use of and derive benefits from two interventions, at close range, of the political leaders of major stakeholders like France and Germany?

On the ESA scene it appears that major new decisions are expected on i.a. the space situational awareness initiative, on reviewing all exploration partnership possibilities with the United States and involved European Member States and on guaranteeing a competitive launcher sector.

On the Union side, the Commission is at the crossroad with an imperative urgency to put Galileo on track and GMES services at the disposal of users communities.

On Member States side it is essential to contribute actively to the progress of Galileo and GMES and to reach consensus agreement, if proposals are to be made on key political issues such as unhindered access to space and the subsequent guarantee of safe operation of satellites

Those are just a few of the challenges facing Europe in 2008 and beyond; on the strategic and industrial challenges of the space sector, the review undertaken by French MP's Serge Grouard and Odile Saugues is highly informative⁷

Analyses exist justifying the merits of those choices; the answer lies in the political willingness to allocate adequate resources while ensuring the necessary synergies.

⁷ Report number 688 Assemblée Nationale, France, 5 February 2008.

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