International Relations

Signature of the Framework Agreement between ESA and the People's Republic of China on 18 November

New and Future Member States of the European Union

During the year, Poland and Romania started and essentially concluded negotiations to become European Cooperating States. Hungary and the Czech Republic, both of which already have such status, successfully drew upon the Plan for European Cooperating States (PECS), obtaining several ESA contracts. Hungary formally requested negotiations for accession to the Convention.

A Latvian delegation visited ESA Headquarters in February to enquire about the possibilities of closer cooperation with the Agency. Slovakia approached ESA later in the year with the same query.

Space-faring Nations

United States

Following the Space Shuttle's return to flight in July, ESA and the other International Partners reaffirmed their commitment to the International Space Station (ISS). A final ISS configuration and its associated assembly sequence have yet to be firmly established and agreed.

Consultations continued with NASA to identify possibilities for cooperation on missions to the Moon and Mars.

ESA and NASA continued their cooperation on missions currently in orbit – namely SOHO, Cluster-II, Ulysses, Cassini/Huygens, the Hubble Space Telescope, Integral, Rosetta and Mars Express – whilst also further defining cooperation on the James Webb Space Telescope, LISA, and Herschel and Planck missions.

Russian Federation

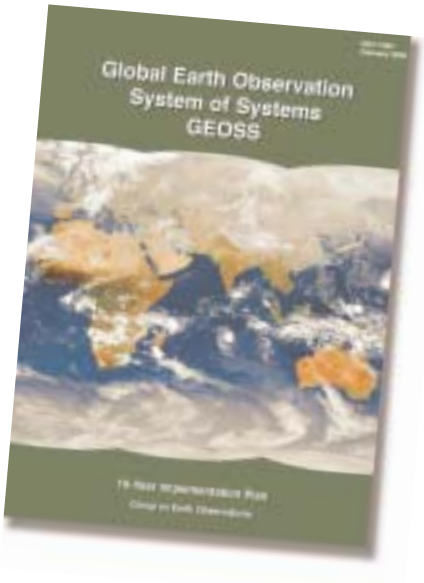
Cooperation with Russia was strengthened. The agreement on Soyuz at CSG (formally known as the 'Agreement on Long Term Cooperation and Partnership in the Field of the Development, Implementation and Use of Launchers') was signed on 19 January by ESA's Director General and the Head of the Russian Space Agency. An 'Implementing Arrangement on Cooperation in Research and Technology Development for Future Launchers' was subsequently signed on 19 May by ESA's Director of Launchers and the Deputy Head of the Russian Space Agency. The signature of these two agreements formally opened the way for a Euro-Russian partnership in the launchers domain.

ESA participated in the Moscow Air Show (MAKS) in August.

Japan

ESA and the Japanese Aerospace Cooperation Agency (JAXA) finalised the text of a Memorandum of Understanding on the ALOS (Advanced Land Observing Satellite) data node. This provides for the provision of environmental data and imagery to European and African users.

ESA and JAXA pursued their cooperation on the ASTRO-F mission, and continued to plan for the ESA BepiColombo



The GEOSS Ten-Year Implementation Plan

Mission to Mercury, for which JAXA will provide the magnetospheric orbiter. ESA and JAXA also continued discussions on coordination of the data-collection campaigns in lunar orbit between JAXA's Selene and ESA's SMART-1 missions.

Following the successful launch of the Japanese telecommunication satellite OICETS on 24 August, ESA and JAXA were finally able to implement their long-planned cooperation on the Artemis/OICETS optical inter-orbit link experiments.

The 30th Japan/ESA Annual Meeting took place in Tokyo on 24 and 25 October. One of its results was a decision to explore cooperation possibilities regarding components, software and simulation.

China

Cooperation with the People's Republic of China took a big step forward on 18 November when ESA's Director General and the Head of the Chinese National Space Agency signed a Framework Agreement.

A second Dragon Workshop took place on the island of Santorini in Greece in late June, and some 70 Chinese scientists took part. The Dragon project stimulates joint European-Chinese exploitation of Earth-observation data from ESA's Envisat satellite. The scientific content of the programme remains at an exceptionally high level, with some of its results being published in the journal *Nature*.

The first contracts with Chinese industries for the Euro-Chinese cooperation on Galileo were signed in the autumn.

India

ESA's Director General and the Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) signed an agreement for the European provision of instruments for Chandrayaan-1, an Indian lunar mission scheduled for launch in 2007.

Others

Republic of Korea

Negotiations continued on an agreement on the exchange of data between Envisat and the Korean satellite Kompsat-2, due for launch in spring 2006. The Korean space sector is growing rapidly.

Vietnam

The Agency took an active part in a workshop in Hanoi, both to encourage the use of Envisat data and to support European industry.

Australia

Negotiations with Australia on tracking stations to service future ESA missions continued, notably for Ariane-5 (Galileo and ATV).

Africa

The year saw a transition of responsibilities for the Tiger Project (water management in Africa) to ESRIN in Frascati (I). The north-south technology-transfer projects initiated in 2003 through the Data User Element (DUE) Programme proceeded, and 50 proposals in reply to the specific Tiger Announcement of Opportunity were selected. A Steering Committee composed mainly of African stakeholders was set up. It adopted a three-year Implementation Plan, which was presented to the stakeholders at the Tiger 2005 Workshop at ESRIN in October.

The deployment of EGNOS Testbed Reference and Integrity Monitoring Stations (RIMS) at sites across the African Continent was finalised. A demonstration flight took place in May between Senegal and Kenya, paving the way for the African EGNOS pre-operational service. A Framework Agreement between ESA and ASECNA (Agence pour la Sécurité Aérienne en Afrique et à Madagascar) was approved by the ESA Council in June.

International Organisations

UNCOPUOS (United Nations Committee On the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space)

ESA continued to coordinate European views in the COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies.

GEO (Group on Earth Observations)

ESA participated in the Third Earth Observation Summit in Brussels in February, which adopted a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) Ten-Year Implementation Plan.