

Global sea level rise monitoring secured for next decade

Darmstadt, 1 February – The transatlantic Jason-3 Programme has now been approved by EUMETSAT Member States thus ensuring a continuation of the series of measurements made by the Jason-2 satellite and its predecessors in support of meteorology, operational oceanography and in particular the monitoring of the sea level trend, a key indicator of climate change.

Nineteen EUMETSAT Member States have agreed to subscribe to the Jason-3 ocean altimetry satellite programme: Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Together, these countries are prepared to contribute €63.6 million (at 2009 economic conditions) to the €252-million programme cost of Jason-3.

Today, Jason-2's Ocean Surface Topography Mission provides a vital contribution to the monitoring of climate change, ocean circulation and weather. Jason-2 already supplies the much-needed data continuity essential for measuring the sea level trend, one of the key indicators of climate change. Jason-3 will continue the mission, ensuring the measurement of rising sea levels carried out by Jason-2, Jason-1 and TOPEX/Poseidon over the last 18 years. These high accuracy measurements have until now shown an average global annual sea level rise through the last 15 years of 3.3 millimetres.

The EUMETSAT Director-General, Dr. Lars Prahm, welcomed the completion of subscriptions to Jason-3: "The fact that nearly 80 per cent of EUMETSAT members, including all its largest Member States, are participating shows the importance they attach to continuing the mission begun so successfully by Jason-2 and that the solidarity among EUMETSAT Member States continues to prevail."

The Jason-3 programme is led by EUMETSAT and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA already secured funding of the Jason-3 programme in 2009 at the level of €100 million and has given it top priority for securing climate-related measurements. In addition, the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES), the French space agency, is making a significant in-kind contribution to the programme and will act at the technical level as the system coordinator. This in-kind contribution includes making available the Jason-3 Proteus satellite platform, its facilities and associated human resources.

The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in conjunction with the three other partners, will support science team activities. The US contribution to Jason-3 includes the satellite launch, provision of instruments and support to operations.

About EUMETSAT

The European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites is an intergovernmental organisation based in Darmstadt, Germany, currently with 24 European Member States (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom) and seven Cooperating States (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Iceland, Lithuania, Romania, and Serbia).

EUMETSAT is operating the geostationary satellites Meteosat-8 and -9 over Europe and Africa, and Meteosat-6 and -7 over the Indian Ocean.

Metop-A, the first European polar-orbiting meteorological satellite, was launched in October 2006 and has been delivering operational data since 15 May 2007.

The Jason-2 ocean altimetry satellite, launched on 20 June 2008, added ocean surface topography to the missions EUMETSAT conducts.

The data and products from EUMETSAT's satellites make a significant contribution to weather forecasting and to the monitoring of the global climate.

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