

Statement of Belgium at the 'Space Council' of 25.11.04

Mrs President, Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me firstly to apologise for the absence this evening of Minister Marc Verwilghen, who is in charge of the Belgian space policy. On the occasion of this first 'Space Council', he is happy to offer you the recently published book, « Belgians in Space ».

In the allotted time, here are Belgium's first comments on the preparation of the future European space programme.

First of all, we must see to it that the first act which founds our collective ambition of establishing a European space programme is the concrete achievement of the programmes on which we have already reached agreement. Our priority will thus be placed first on the effective implementation of these programmes, in particular in the area of access to space (I would mention here our future range of rocket launchers), space infrastructure (notably the Galileo system) and the applications (like GMES).

Secondly, Belgium stresses that the European space programme must be a common framework for all actors, and endowed with sufficient flexibility on the programmatic, financial and decision-making levels, namely by continuing to profit from what has already been achieved within the European Space Agency. And this in order to optimise the conditions which will make it possible – and this is one of the main objectives we pursue - to bring together the offer of space tools and the demand expressed by the users, in particular the policies of the European Union and its Member States and the expectations of European citizens.

Our attention must also be focused on the aspects relating to the industrial policy that will be implemented within the framework of the European space programme. This industrial policy cannot ignore the contribution of all States, including the smallest, and the specific features of their space industry with the scientific and technological expertise they have acquired.

Finally, to conclude, Belgium expresses its approval of the orientations proposed at this stage for the preparation of the European space programme. It expects from the joint ESA/EC secretariat that it will continue to prepare this programme on the basis of the documents which have been presented for information during this first session of the 'Space Council', and this in close consultation with the Member States.

Thank you for your attention.

E.B.