

**Intervenção de
José Mariano Gago,
Ministro da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior de Portugal**

**Conselho Ministerial da
Agência Espacial Europeia**

Haia, 25 de Novembro de 2008

Dear Minister Maria van Hoeven, former ESA President, dear friend,
Thank you for organising this Ministerial, for your hospitality, and for your longstanding commitment and efforts for the development of science, technology, and space in Europe.

Dear new Chair, Maria Stella Gemini, thank you for accepting your new responsibilities.

Dear Director General, Jean Jacques Dordain, you deserve not only all our support but also our gratitude for conducting the European Space Agency so effectively and professionally. Thank you very much for maintaining the independence of ESA as well as for reinforcing its networking and collaboration with national and EU institutions.

Colleagues,

This ESA Ministerial comes at very difficult times. We face a difficult financially, budgetary and economic global crisis of unknown proportions. These are times for courageous political decisions. Counter cycle policies are, more than ever, absolutely necessary. The Lisbon Strategy for Europe underlines how critical science and technology are for sustainable economic and social development.

Space is one of the most important science and technology economy clusters with immense impact across almost all other domains.

Reinforcing our commitment to science & technology and to space research is therefore a clear political and economic message that we should make sure to deliver.

A new political cycle in the USA offers the opportunity for a new cycle of collaboration between Europe and the USA. We think that ESA should fully exploit this opportunity for mutual benefit.

Portugal supports the Director General's proposal and vision.

Portugal is prepared to reinforce its investment in new ESA programmes, namely ARTES and GNSS Evolution, Mars Robotic Exploration, Enhanced ExoMars, European Transportation and Human Exploration, GMES Space Component, General Support Technology, Climate Change Initiative, Space Situational Awareness and Future Launchers, in addition to the programmes we already subscribe.

We would like to underline the importance of GMES and of the initiative GMES- Africa for the interest of European cooperation policy, and for the new role of Europe in Africa in view of the next economic cycle.

We share with you all the strategic importance of exposing our industries to the challenges of space research and engineering. New start-up companies have emerged from participating in ESA programmes, as well as new scientists, new engineers and new science students, girls and boys.

We would like also to underline the importance of the science programme and would like to urge ESA to strengthen its education activities, in close collaboration with Member states. Space is increasingly an important window of opportunities for attracting new human resources for science and technology and for sustaining and strengthening the constituency for science & technology development in Europe.

In this respect, Portugal is expecting to finally participate in the ESA astronaut programme. This is for us an important issue to ensure long term public and political support to ESA and to space activities.

Madame Chair, Director General, Colleagues, thank you for your attention.