
ESA chief praises China-Europe SMILE mission cooperation



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PARIS: European Space Agency (ESA) Director General Josef Aschbacher has praised the China-Europe SMILE mission, saying it shows how well-governed international scientific cooperation can deliver real value to the global scientific community.

The Solar wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer (SMILE), a joint project between the

Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and ESA, was launched Tuesday aboard a Vega-Crocket from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana. The satellite aims to improve understanding of solar storms, geomagnetic disturbances, and space weather phenomena.

In an interview with Xinhua, Aschbacher said ESA and China share a long history of cooperation, from early data-sharing in the 1990s to current collaboration in Earth and space science missions. He noted Europe contributed the payload module and Soft X-ray Imager, while CAS developed the Ultraviolet Imager and spacecraft platform. He said that despite complex technical challenges, the mission was completed successfully through the efforts of more than 250 Chinese and European scientists working jointly on scientific and engineering tasks.

Aschbacher said the open and responsible model of China-Europe cooperation can also support global priorities such as climate research. Space-based data from both sides improves understanding of Earth systems and supports efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and limit global warming.

Looking ahead, he said ESA continues to explore further opportunities for cooperation with China in Earth observation and space science missions.