

Israel, European space agencies sign cooperation agreement

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and BEN HARTMAN

Israel will be cooperating in projects of the European Space Agency (ESA), after an agreement was signed Sunday by Israel Space Agency (ISA) director Dr. Zvi Kaplan, with Science and Technology Minister Daniel Herschkowitz looking on.

ESA director Jean-Jacques Dordain signed on behalf of his agency.

Herschkwitz said at the ceremony, which was held as part of the Ilan Ramon International Space Conference in Herzliya, that the agreement "constitutes international recognition of Israel's status as a space power."

Kaplan added that the accord was "another step in research and development ties with Europe, both in general and in the field of space, and will make possible expanded scientific and economic cooperation with European nations."

The accord is aimed at increasing research for peaceful uses of space that interest both sides.

Among the fields in which the ESA and ISA will cooperate are astronomy, astrophysics, solar system research and space engineering; micro- and nano-sized satellites; observations of Earth from space, especially to monitor pollution on Earth, weather and natural disasters; development of services based on satellite navigation; research projects for materials engineering under conditions of no gravity; and development of advanced technologies for land stations



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY Minister Daniel Herschkowitz (right) adds a light moment at a press conference in Herzliya yesterday after the signing of an Israeli-European agreement on space cooperation. NASA deputy chief Lori Garver (left) and European Space Agency director Jean-Jacques Dordain share the laugh. (Ben Hartman)

that managing satellite.

ESA brings together 18 European countries and has an annual budget of 4 billion euros.

The Herzliya conference is held in the memory of Ramon, Israel's first astronaut, who died in the fatal *Columbia* space shuttle mission eight years ago.

Deputy Chief of NASA Lori Garver told a press conference at the convention on Sunday that "NASA and Israel have had a long-standing partnership throughout our history," adding that NASA mission S-107, on which Ramon perished "has combined our countries' space missions forever."

"If we cannot work together peacefully in space, where

can we?" Garver asked.

When asked if she thought there would be another Israeli astronaut, Garver said that the final two space shuttle missions have already been staffed, but "the mission of space is international and I can't imagine that in the future there won't be Israeli astronauts."

Garver also said that astronaut Mark Kelly, the husband of US Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot in the head during a January 8 attack in Tucson, Arizona that killed six, will decide by mid-February whether to take part in April's *Endeavor* mission.

Kelly has been tapped as the commander of the mission, which is the last space shuttle mission, but has been

tending to his wife since the attack, making his status on the mission questionable.

"It's an important thing to them as a family, but they have to balance their priorities," Garver said, "So I think we'll be having that decision in mid-February."

Dordain said he believes that the message of the convention is "we have no individual future, we have a shared future."

Dordain championed Israel's technological capabilities and argued that "there is no limit to the imagination" of what greater space technology cooperation can bring, and stressed the importance of competition in space technology development.