

Israel to work on European space projects

January 30 2011

Israel on Sunday signed an agreement with the European Space Agency for cooperation on space technology and exploration of the solar system, the Israeli science and technology ministry said.

"The agreement facilitates the exchange of scientists, engineers and information, the holding of joint conferences and symposiums and the promotion of communications and exchanges between research institutions and industries," it said in a statement.

The ministry said that agreed areas of research included astrophysics, satellite engineering and monitoring environmental contamination and natural disasters. It would also cover [space](#) biology and telecommunications.

Israel has had three [communications satellites](#) sent into space, the last being the Amos-3, launched from Kazakhstan by a Russian Zenit rocket in 2008.

The website of Israel Aerospace Industries, the manufacturer, says an Amos-4 is scheduled for launch in 2012, but does not say from where.

Israel also has its own Shavit rocket which has put six spy satellites into orbit, the most recent being the Ofek-9 which is reportedly capable of monitoring arch-foe Iran.

It is also believed to have a stock of ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Sunday's agreement between Israel and the 18-member [European Space Agency](#) (ESA) stressed the civilian nature of future collaboration.

"This is the first agreement of its kind between Israel and the ESA, which within its framework, achieves and promotes projects of mutual interest in the fields of research and the peaceful use of outer space," the statement said.

Israel, which has the Middle East's sole, albeit undeclared, nuclear arsenal, regards Iran as its principal threat after repeated predictions by the Islamic republic's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of the Jewish state's demise.

Along with the West, Israel suspects Iran of trying to develop atomic weapons under the guise of its nuclear programme, a claim Tehran denies.

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