Russian rocket sends European weather satellite into orbit

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Europe's latest weather satellite Metop-B is pictured sealed in a Soyuz rocket mounted on a launch pad at the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on September 14.

The European meteorological satellite Metop-B was put into orbit Monday by a Russian Soyuz rocket launched from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, the space agency Roskosmos said.

The entry into orbit took place "as planned" at 1737 GMT, a Russian

space agency spokesman told AFP.

The 4100-kilogram (4.1-tonne) satellite is expected to remain in a polar orbit for five years.

The Metop-B weather satellite was developed and built by Astrium, the top European company in the space industry.

From its polar orbit at 817 kilometres (508 miles) from Earth, the satellite will provide different measures that are essential to meteorological forecasts and the monitoring of the planet's climate, according to Astrium.

Metop-B is the second in a series of three weather satellites that the European Space Agency (ESA) along with the European Organisation for Meteorological Satellite Exploration (EUMETSAT) has ordered from Astrium.

The satellites have been launched at five to six year intervals, with the first Metop-A going into space in 2006. The third Metop-C satellite is scheduled for orbit in 2017. The series is intended to provide continuity in furnishing information until the arrival of a new generation of satellites.