Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Treaty of Lisbon marks a crucial milestone in the history of European construction and space endeavours.

Thanks to the European Space Agency, the European Union has attained the status of civil space power. It must in the future attain the status of space power outright. To do that, it will need to build on the experience of ESA, on its successes. That building process will as of now need to include the dimensions that for too long have been disregarded in European space policy: international relations and security/defence.

To that end, it is important to reflect on how ESA can forge closer links with the system of European institutions, on a basis that might perhaps draw on the model of the European Defence Agency. Not so that it is ‘absorbed’ within the existing European system. That would make no sense. But so that, on the contrary, ESA ends up strengthened and is fully assigned all the space missions that our status as a global power requires.

I know that its Director General, Jean-Jacques Dordain, who I made a point of meeting back in April, is devoting much effort to this ambitious task. I know that with our assistance, that of the Member States, the Commission, the Parliament and all space actors, he can fulfil that task, as he has already left his mark on the history of space activities in Europe by being – and this is a unique accomplishment – unanimously re-elected to serve a third term at the helm of ESA. I warmly congratulate him on his re-election.

And if I said “with our assistance”, it is because I intend including on the European Council agenda in 2011 an item dealing with “space governance in Europe”. Governance closely linked to the missions and budgets required for an ambitious and wide-ranging space policy. Naturally I shall only do this if I sense sufficiently strong convergence between Member States on moving towards this added coherence and this added ambition. But in any case I want you to know that there lies my greatest desire.

And it is in that spirit that I wish you all a productive conference.