



## ESA COUNCIL DECISIONS SET THE STAGE FOR MORE DIVERSE EUROPEAN LAUNCH SERVICES

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**Colleferro (Rome), 05 July 2024** – ESA Council adopted today a resolution on European launch services and on the continuity of European access to space, that sets the way for the ESA-developed Vega launcher to be commercialised by its prime contractor, Avio.

The Vega launchers joined the ESA-developed launchers family with its first flight in 2012 and started commercial exploitation in 2015. Vega-C, a more powerful version of Vega with a larger fairing made its debut in 2022. Both variants are built under the responsibility of prime contractor Avio and have been exploited by Arianespace.

“ESA Member States are finalising the changes needed to the framework governing the exploitation of ESA-developed launchers to allow for Avio to become Vega launch service provider, says Toni Tolker-Nielsen, ESA Director of Space Transportation, “With today’s decisions, ESA Member States are ensuring continuity while allowing Avio to market the Vega launch services from now on.”

Today’s Resolution follows from a Resolution adopted by ESA Council in Seville on 6 November 2023 that called upon ESA Member States and the Director General to initiate a review of the legal framework governing the exploitation of ESA-developed launchers with the objective that Avio could become the operator and launch service provider of Vega as soon as possible.

Arianespace and Avio have agreed that Arianespace will remain the launch service provider and operator for Vega and Vega-C launch services until Vega flight 29 (VV29), scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2025.

For Vega-C launches following VV29, the customers who have already contracted with Arianespace will be offered the possibility to transfer their contracts to Avio as the new launch service provider and sole operator of Vega.

Arianespace will primarily focus with ArianeGroup on the Ariane 6 exploitation to best meet the customer needs.

*"A new step has been taken in the implementation of the decisions taken at the Seville space summit: Arianespace is carrying out the next six missions of the Vega launcher before handing over to its partner Avio. We will work with ESA and Avio to make this transition a success in the interests of our customers. The Arianespace teams are in the starting blocks to prepare with ArianeGroup the operation and ramp-up of the Ariane 6 launcher,"* declared Stéphane Israël, CEO of Arianespace.

*"We welcome the steps taken by the European Space Agency for the evolution of the governance of the launcher sector in Europe and are excited to start Vega-C commercial activities in support to customers with full commitment and dedication"* said Giulio Ranzo, CEO of Avio.

### **Ensuring access to space**

Today's Resolution includes the definition of what constitutes a "European launch service". This is key to ensure European autonomous access to space and includes considerations on the nationality of the launch service provider and location of the launcher system development, manufacturing and launch operations.

Finally, ESA Council also authorised the use of Europe's Spaceport launch range in French Guiana by four micro- and mini-launchers from European launch service providers Isar Aerospace, MaiaSpace, PLD Space and Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA).

These decisions set the stage for more diverse European launch services in an increasingly competitive environment.

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### **For further information**

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***Avio** is a leading international group engaged in the construction and development of space launchers and solid, liquid and cryogenic propulsion systems. The experience and knowhow built up over more than 50 years puts Avio at the cutting edge of the space launcher sector and defence program. Avio operates in Italy, France and France Guyana with 5 facilities, employing approx. 1,300 highly qualified personnel, of which approx. 30% involved in research and development. Avio is a prime contractor for the Vega programme and a sub-contractor for the Ariane programme, both financed by the European Space Agency (ESA) placing Italy among the limited number of countries capable of producing a complete spacecraft.*