Safran Herakles, a world leader in solid propulsion

Safran finalized on May 1st 2012 the merger of its two subsidiaries, SME (a specialist in energetic materials) and Snecma Propulsion Solide Solide (a specialist in solid rocket motors for missiles and launchers), giving birth to a world leader in solid propulsion, called Herakles. Philippe Schleicher, Herakles Chairman and CEO provides some explanations.

How is Herakles organized?

Philippe Schleicher: Herakles and its subsidiaries / affiliates Pyroalliance, Structil, Roxel, Europropulsion, Regulus, Suzhou SME-ChangQing form an ensemble with more than 3,000 employees (including 2,200 in the Bordeaux region), working at 12 plants. It is organized in five business units, reflecting the natural segmentation of its market: Strategic Propulsion, Space Propulsion, Tactical Propulsion, Aeronautics and Thermostructural Composites, and Manufacturing and Organic Matrix Composites.

What will bring Herakles to the Group?

Ph. S.: Through the merger of SME and SPS, Safran aims to establish a world leader in solid propulsion. The creation of Herakles allows us to merge, within a single entity, all French operations concerning energetic materials and solid rocket motors, thus bolstering the Group’s international position and competitive advantages in this market.

What are Herakles main strengths?

Ph. S.: Herakles also boosts Safran innovation capacity by uniting nearly 500 R&D experts and two laboratories that have earned global recognition: its Le Bouchet Research Center (CRB) and the Thermostructural Composites Laboratory (LCTC). And of course, like SPS, Herakles will continue to be Safran’s Center of Excellence for Thermostructural Composites.

Herakles enjoys a very solid outlook for the near future and very promising prospects looking further ahead, since space and defense businesses should be stable in the coming years. But we also operate in highly competitive markets, namely gas generators for automobile airbags and solid rocket motors for tactical missiles, where we have to offer highly innovative solutions. At the same time, we are already working on the technological building blocks that will be needed for a possible new-generation Ariane launcher, as well as upgraded ballistic missiles.