

Press release

31 January 2003

France has decided to be a candidate to host the ITER project

A meeting of the ministers dealing with the ITER international research project (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) on thermonuclear fusion (tritium/deuterium) was held in Matignon on 30 January 2003 and was chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr.

Jean-Pierre Raffarin. France has decided to confirm that Cadarache will be a candidate to host this plant. The estimated cost of construction, which should take ten years, is more than

4.6 billion euros. The estimated cost for operating this reactor, with a service life of around 20 years, is 5.7 billion euros. Since 1998 the European Union, within which France has taken a very active part, Japan, Russia and Canada, have worked together to finalise the programme's definition. Today the United States have joined this project which began at the end of the 1980's. Several days ago, China also expressed its wish to participate.

This very ambitious and complex international research programme would therefore be spread over approximately thirty years. Its aim is to test the scientific and technical feasibility of industrial reactors for producing electricity using plasma, the equivalent state of matter in the Sun (ionised gas at very high temperatures : 100 million degrees). The aim of these systems is to satisfy the planet's long-term energy needs. The implementation of industrial reactors is expected for the end of this century, respecting sustainable development requirements. There is a practically unlimited supply of consumable items available and the process does not act on the greenhouse effect.

Claudie Haigneré, the minister responsible for Research and New Technologies, expressed her full support for the project. She is responsible for promoting the advantages of Cadarache in view of the choice by international bodies which will decide on the site from the four candidatures (France, Spain, Japan and Canada). She declared : "This decision by the French Government is witness to the importance which France attaches to the pursuit of work on controlled fusion and maintaining its key role in this field, in particular thanks to the vitality of its scientific community, namely the CEA. Controlled fusion is a major challenge. It could provide a solution to a crucial world problem, that of the long-term availability of energy resources."

The Minister expressed her satisfaction for the strong support expressed by the local authorities of the PACA region (Conseil Régional Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Conseils Généraux of the Var, Vaucluse, Bouches du Rhône and Alpes de Haute Provence, and the Pays d'Aix Conurbation Committee), which financially committed themselves to this project.

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