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Nuclear fusion reactor project in France: an expensive and senseless nuclear stupidity

Paris, 28 June 2005 - Greenpeace deplores the agreement by the Representatives of the Parties to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) (1) to construct one of the world's largest nuclear fusion experiments in Cadarache, Southern France. The project, estimated to cost 10bn euros, will not generate any electricity, instead it will need massive amounts of energy to heat up.

"With 10 billion, we could build 10,000MW offshore windfarms, delivering electricity for 7.5 million European households," said Jan Vande Putte of Greenpeace International. Advocates of fusion research predict that the first commercial fusion electricity might be delivered in 50 to 80 years from now. But most likely, it will lead to a dead end, as the technical barriers to be overcome are enormous.

Today, the nuclear industry presents itself as the solution to climate change in a massive green-washing drive. Far from being a solution, the nuclear option stalls real action to combat dangerous climate change. It is taking away the money for real solutions that are ready and economically available at a large scale, such as wind energy.

Fusion energy - if it would ever operate - would create a serious waste problem, would emit large amounts of radioactive material and could be used to produce materials for nuclear weapons. A whole new set of nuclear risks would thus be created.

"Governments should not waste our money on a dangerous toy which will never deliver any useful energy," said Jan Vande Putte of Greenpeace International. Instead, they should invest in renewable energy which is abundantly available, not in 2080 but today"

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Notes to Editors:

(1) The European Union, the United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea and China are partners in this project.