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## Thirty states sign ITER nuclear fusion plant deal

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Representatives of more than 30 countries signed a deal on Tuesday to build the world's most advanced nuclear fusion reactor, aimed at developing a cheap and abundant energy source as the end of fossil fuels looms.

After months of wrangling, France edged out Japan last year in its bid to host the 10 billion euro (\$12.8 billion) International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), which will be built at Cadarache, near the southern city of Marseille.

At a ceremony hosted by French President Jacques Chirac, representatives of the European Union, the United States, Japan, India, Russia, South Korea and China signed the ITER agreement in the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris, finalizing the project after years of negotiations.

"If nothing changes, humanity will have consumed, in 200 years, most of the fossil fuel resources accumulated over hundreds of millions of years," said Chirac, underscoring the stakes behind the project.

"It (the ITER project) is the victory of the general interest of humanity," he added.

The ITER reactor will aim to turn seawater into fuel by mimicking the way the sun produces energy. Its backers say that would be cleaner than existing nuclear reactors, but critics argue it could be at least 50 years before a commercially viable reactor is built, if one is built at all.

Unlike existing fission reactors, which release energy by splitting atoms apart, ITER would generate energy by combining atoms. Despite decades of research, experimental fusion reactors have so far been unable to release more energy than they use.