

Science - AFP

## Japan, US not ruling out French site for nuclear project: EU official



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BRUSSELS (AFP) - Japan and the United States are no longer categorically ruling out a French bid to host a revolutionary nuclear fusion project, an official with the European Union's executive arm said.



Speaking after the latest round of talks on the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) in Vienna ended without agreement, European Commission spokesman Fabio Fabbi said "we are pretty positive".

"The EU proposals were not accepted, but they weren't rejected either, which is a good sign in itself," he told AFP.

The two candidates to host ITER, which would emulate the sun's nuclear fusion to generate inexhaustible electricity, are Cadarache in southern France and Rokkasho-mura in northern Japan.

Fabbi said that Japan and the United States "didn't express a firm support" to locate ITER at Cadarache, which has the EU's firm support, "but they didn't reject it out of hand".

"So there is room for being cautiously optimistic and positive," the spokesman said.

The talks in Vienna grouped officials from Japan and the EU along with the project's other backers: the United States and South Korea -- which have supported the Japanese bid -- plus Russia and China, which back the EU bid.

No date has been fixed for another round of negotiations, Fabbi said.

But briefing reporters earlier in the day, the spokesman said the EU was prepared to forge ahead with ITER at Cadarache "with the maximum number of partners" if the six-party discussions break down.

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