



Tuesday November 9, 06:21 PM

Nuclear project talks end in Vienna without agreement



VIENNA (AFP) - The latest round of six-party talks on a revolutionary nuclear energy project ended in Vienna with the parties failing to decide on whether it will be located in France or Japan.

Satoru Ohtake, in charge of nuclear fusion at the Japanese science and technology ministry, said: "We did not reach an agreement ... but the discussions were not aiming at choosing a site".

In Brussels, the European Union had said Tuesday it was prepared to forge ahead with the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) if negotiations with Japan and other backers on where to locate it broke down.

"Our basis for negotiations is to locate ITER at Cadarache (in France) and we hope to achieve that," European Commission spokesman Fabio Fabbi told reporters.

The two candidates to host ITER are Cadarache in southern France and Rokkasho-mura in northern Japan.

Officials from the EU's executive and Japan met to discuss the ITER site at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna on Monday.

Another meeting was being held in Vienna on Tuesday bringing in the other ITER project partners: the United States and South Korea -- which support the Japanese bid -- plus Russia and China, which back the EU bid.

Japan is adamant that it still wants to host the ITER project, questioning the EU's optimism that France will be chosen by the project's backers.

"The Japanese have not changed their position," the source in Vienna said.

ITER is a test bed for what is being billed as a clean, safe, inexhaustible energy source of the future. The project, emulating the sun's nuclear fusion, is not expected to generate electricity before 2050.

The ITER budget is projected to be 10 billion euros (13 billion dollars) over the next 30 years, including 4.7 billion euros to build the reactor. The EU plans to finance 40 percent of the total. The European Commission is to make a proposal November 26 on the EU's position on the ITER project.

Copyright © 2004 AFP AFP. All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2004 Yahoo! UK Limited. All rights reserved.