European Commission presents blueprint for the final sprint in ITER negotiations

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European Commission presents blueprint for the final sprint in ITER negotiations

Today at its meeting in Strasbourg (France) the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Council decision on the international negotiations for ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor). The Commission has proposed changes to its negotiating mandate to help reach consensus in the negotiations with all six parties (EU, Japan, China, Russia, South Korea and the USA) to jointly build ITER at the European candidate site of Cadarache (France). Subject to the Council's decision of 26 November, the Commission will endeavour to bring negotiations to a successful conclusion with all parties as soon as possible. A central feature of a consensus could be a "genuine partnership" between the EU and Japan. Japan could receive favourable conditions to reflect its special contribution to the ITER project. Furthermore, the EU could contribute to other fusion research initiatives carried out in Japan to complement the ITER project as part of a "broader approach" to mastering fusion energy.

What is energy from nuclear fusion?

Fusion generates clean energy by fusing together light atoms such as hydrogen. ITER will generate power of about 500 million watts from a particular state of matter ("plasma"). This power will exceed, by a factor of 10, the power injected into the plasma. Total costs for construction and operation should amount to around €10 billion, over 35 years.

Cadarache is Europe's choice

The Council decided unanimously in November 2003 to propose the site of Cadarache (France) as the EU candidate site for hosting ITER.

Hope for international agreement in the near future

Japan has proposed its site of Rokkasho-Mura with the support of the USA and Korea, while China and Russia have backed the EU candidate site. Following positive international talks in Vienna on November 9, all Parties expressed "optimism" that consensus on the site may be at hand. The proposed negotiation mandate is thus aimed at achieving agreement to construct ITER in Cadarache with all 6 parties. Should the parties fail to attain this hoped for

consensus, the EU would pursue ITER construction in the broadest possible partnership, as discussed by the Council at its meeting of 24 September 2004.

The Broader Approach

The six Parties have been exploring a 'broader approach to fusion power' involving other international activities complementing the ITER project, including the possibility of:

- a test facility for materials, IFMIF (International Fusion Materials Irradiation Facility);
- smaller fusion devices, the "satellite tokamaks", for example the Joint European Torus (JET) in Culham (UK) and the planned JT60 Superconductive reactor in Japan.

ITER Construction Costs

The breakdown of costs within an agreement to build ITER in Cadarache with the backing of all 6 parties would be as follows:

Total ITER Construction Costs: €4,570 billion

EU budget (max 50%), i.e. max €2,285 billion, of which maximum 40% from Community Budget, i.e. max. €1,828 billion

Other Parties' contributions (min 50%): min. €2,285 billion

For ITER and Broader approach activities, additional contributions would come in particular from the host country, France, some other European countries, and possibly Japan.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/energy/fu/article_1122_en.htm

http://www.iter.org/