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3RD LD: Japan-EU row delays decision on nuke reactor site

(EDS: ADDING DETAILS)

Japan and the European Union failed to iron out their differences Tuesday over the location to host a global nuclear fusion project during the latest round of talks in Vienna with four other countries participating.

Japan and the EU will hold talks before **all parties convene a ministerial meeting in Moscow in December to make a final decision on the location**, negotiation sources said, adding that all negotiating partners nevertheless agreed to proceed with the project within their six-party framework.

Satoru Otake, a member of the Japanese delegation to the latest round and head of the science and technology ministry's nuclear fusion development office, told reporters that neither Japan nor the EU is in a mood to give in.

The European Union is prepared to launch its own study to construct the \$12 billion International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor if the vice-ministerial level talks fail to find common ground, an EU spokesman said.

Japan, the European Union, the United States, Russia, China and South Korea are collaborating on the ITER project and have yet to make major headway on where to build the reactor. The United States and South Korea support Japan hosting the reactor while Russia and China want it located in the European Union.

On Monday, Reuters and other news media in Europe reported the European Union is confident a deal to be outlined Tuesday would locate the ITER project in Cadarache, France, and that Japan had signaled it would give up its bid in return for some form of compensation. The reports cited EU sources.

The Japanese delegation quickly denied the reports, with one member saying they must have been aimed at "interrupting the talks." The European Union has proposed the ITER be located in Cadarache while Japan's candidate site is the village of Rokkasho in Aomori Prefecture.

The latest round was the first among the six parties since June. Intergovernmental talks started in November 2001 but failed to produce a final decision due to the stalemate between Japan and the European Union. The ITER project is aimed at creating the world's first sustained nuclear fusion reaction, similar to the energy-producing process that constantly takes place in the sun.