

Decision on the choice of the site for ITER reactor deferred

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The site which will accomodate the future experimental reactor of nuclear fusion (ITER) was to be selected Saturday among two competitors, Japan and France.

No consensus was found Saturday December 20 concerning the choice of the site which will accomodate the future experimental reactor of nuclear fusion (ITER), in Japan or in France, by the six partners of the project brought together close to Washington. The announcement was made at the end of the day by the emissary of the French government Pierre Lellouche. He indicated that the decision on the choice of the site of the ITER *"had been deferred, probably to the mid-February"*.

While the meeting between the Ministers for energy and research still continued, pessimism reigned already on a decision this Saturday. *"It is not very probable that a choice of site is made today because there is not yet consensus, the positions seem divided three against three"*, indicated a member of a delegation present to the ministerial meeting with Reston (Virginia), under cover of anonymity.

The choice of the site must be done by consensus, and not at the end of a vote in the majority. The European Union, Russia and China support the site of Cadarache, whereas the United States, Japan and South Korea prefer the Japanese site of Rokkasho-Mura, specified this source. According to a member of another delegation, under cover of anonymity, the things however had evolved/moved in favour of the French site during the meeting, South Korea having decided to abstain from.

The site of Cadarache, in the south-east of France, is in competition with that of Rokkasho-Mura, in the north of Japan, for this project, whose total cost is evaluated to 30 billion euros over 30 years with, with the key, of significant economic repercussions.

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At the beginning of the meeting, the American Secretary of Energy, Spencer Abraham, underlined *"the promising character of fusion"*. *"During the lifespan of a child born today, the demand for energy will triple compared to what it is today (...) If fusion goes, it will arrive at the good moment. It will be there to meet the need growing in clean sources of energy in the whole world"*, has it says, according to the text of its speech distributed to the press.

The European Union had come in force to the meeting from Saturday to the United States. The European delegation, headed by the European Commission Chief of Research Philippe Busquin, also included the Minister of French Research and New Technologies Claudie Haigneré and the Minister for Education and Research in Italy, Letizia Moratti, whose country takes the revolving presidency of the European Union.

The experimental reactor aims at producing clean and reliable energy by reproducing the fusion which takes place in stars. But this prospect is not for the near future: the founders of the project do not envisage the first kilowatts of electricity before the 2050 time frame.

The two sites put forward a solid experiment of the nuclear power. Rokkasho-Mura houses a great industrial complex including/understanding a nuclear reprocessing plant which will open in July 2006, a center of storage of vitrified waste, a factory of uranium enrichment and a center of storage of waste of weak activity.

The site of Cadarache has housed international research on nuclear energy for 40 years, and Tore Supra carries out since 1988 a prefiguration of ITER with the experimental reactor "Torus" within the framework of a European research program on fusion.

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