

Ministers to initial ITER agreement in Brussels

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Ministers representing the seven ITER parties will meet in Brussels on the 24th of May in the Commission's Berlaymont building in Brussels, to initial the agreement that they have negotiated on jointly implementing the ITER fusion energy research project, which will be located in Cadarache, France.

The seven ITER parties are the EU, China, India, Japan, South Korea, the Russian Federation and the USA. The goal of ITER is to demonstrate the scientific and technological feasibility of fusion energy.

ITER will be built by the ITER Organisation, which will be established under the Agreement and will be responsible for the construction and safe operation of ITER. Being an international organisation, it needs to be established through an international agreement between the Parties.

The initialling of this Agreement opens the way to the authorisation of its conclusion and signature by the governments concerned. This is expected to take place before the end of 2006.

ITER will be a major experimental facility to demonstrate the scientific and technical feasibility of fusion power. The construction costs of ITER are estimated at 4.7 billion Euro over ten years, a large part of which will be awarded in the form of contracts to industrial companies and fusion research institutions. Another five billion Euros are foreseen for the twenty-year exploitation period. Europe will contribute a major share of the costs, while the other six parties to this joint international venture (Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, India, and the USA), will contribute the rest. In June 2005, the partners decided unanimously to choose the European site at Cadarache, in the South of France, as the location for the construction of ITER.

Around half of the hardware in the ITER construction programme will be supplied by Europe through a European Domestic Agency to be based in Barcelona, which will be, amongst other things, responsible for the supply of the European contribution to ITER and for the co-ordination of related R&D.

Fusion is the process that powers the sun and the stars. When light atomic nuclei fuse together to form heavier ones, a large amount of energy is released. Fusion research is aimed at developing a prototype fusion power plant that is safe and reliable, environmentally responsible, economically viable, with abundant and widespread fuel resources. In Europe, fusion research is organised in a coordinated research programme, which provides for an intensive use of all relevant R&D resources in pan-European collaborations on all the major research topics.

Source: European Fusion Development Agreement

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