CERN nuclear physics lab admits Pakistan

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The world's top particle physics lab has admitted Pakistan as an associate member, a year after Israel was voted in as a full member.

Rolf Heuer, director general of the European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN, says he signed a document Friday in Islamabad in the presence of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that admits Pakistan if the government ratifies the associate membership.

Heuer said in a statement Friday that Pakistan has been "a strong participant" in CERN research since the 1990s—and its inclusion in the lab's community serves other important purposes as well.

"Bringing nations together in a peaceful quest for knowledge and education is one of the most important missions of CERN," he said.

The status upgrade means nuclear-armed Pakistan will have more access and say in the research, and that it will be able to bid for contracts, but also that it must contribute more financially each year to the facility.

Pakistan and CERN signed a cooperation agreement in 1994 through which the nation has contributed to the lab's major experiments and become involved in developing CERN's particle accelerator.

Pakistan became a nuclear power in 1988. It routinely test-fires what it claims are indigenously developed missiles.

Last December, the governing council of CERN unanimously voted to

accept Israel as the 21st full member, making it the first non-European country to achieve that status. Israel had gained observer status in 1991 and then became an associate member in 2011.

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