

Speech at the First Stone Ceremony for the future ITER Headquarters building

Dear State Representatives,

Dear Elected Officials,

Dear colleagues of the worldwide ITER and fusion community,

Mesdames et messieurs

On behalf of the ITER Organization, I want to thank you for attending this First Stone Ceremony.

Twenty-five years ago, almost to the day, the ITER project was born.

It happened in Geneva on 19 November 1985, when President Reagan and Secretary Gorbachev agreed to launch an international effort to develop fusion energy... *"as an inexhaustible source of energy for the benefit of all mankind"*.

We are now ready to "Bring a Sun to Cadarache"...

The origin of energy of the Sun was first thought in the 18th century by the release of the gravitational energy. According to this theory, the lifetime of the Sun was only 30 M years. Fusion is the energy that powers the Sun and stars much longer time more than several billion years. We have to remember that until 80 years ago no one clearly understood what made the Sun shine and the stars glitter.

It was thanks to the development of atomic and nuclear physics that physicists like A.S. Eddington in the 1920s and Hans Bethe in the late 1930s were able to understand that Hydrogen fusion reactions were at the core of the process.

The physics of sunshine was at last demonstrated and in 1967, Hans Bethe was awarded the Nobel Prize for this accomplishment.

The fusion community, to which I have belonged for the past three decades, had been waiting for that moment for many years. The Geneva Summit of 1985 gave our project the political momentum it needed.

Twenty-five years later, we – the worldwide ITER and fusion community – are gathered here, next to the ITER platform to lay the first stone of the future ITER Headquarters.

Our long dream has now become a tangible reality. And with this reality comes a tremendous responsibility.

In a little more than 18 months, we will move into this beautifully designed and functional building.

These qualities exist to serve one sole purpose: this is the place where we, as a responsible organization, will work as hard as we can to meet our deadlines and make ITER happen.

Since the ITER Organization was established, more than three years ago, on the platform and in the factories where the ITER components are being manufactured, work is now progressing according to schedule.

As Director-General of the ITER Organization, it is my duty – one which is a great honour and a great responsibility at the same time– to see that the speed of construction and manufacturing is kept so that our project can enter the experimental phase and produce its First Plasma before the end of the year 2019.

Another of my duties is to make sure that ITER and its staff fit into the social, cultural and economic reality of this region so that Provence benefits from ITER.

This building, designed by architects from Marseille and Vinon, will stand as a symbol of our integration into this region.

So, now, let's all sign the parchment which we will insert in the ITER Headquarter's foundation stone.

This document will bear witness, for the centuries to come, to our great human, scientific and technological adventure.

I thank you for your attention.