

First ITER Council convened in Cadarache Historic step in the quest for clean Energy

Cadarache, 28 November 2007

On 27 November 2007, the ITER Council convened for the first time in the history of the new International Organization. Opening the meeting, Dr Werner Burkart, Deputy Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said: "Let me congratulate all who have contributed to the achievements of the ITER initiative to date. I wish you the very best for continued good progress so that fusion technologies can come of age in a world in desperate need of clean, abundant, and carbon dioxide-free energy."

Setting a new paradigm in international scientific collaboration, the two day meeting in Cadarache France brought together top scientific statesmen and stateswomen from China, the European Union, India, Japan, Korea, Russia and the United States. This first Council meeting, convened by the IAEA, came about a month after the entry into force of the ITER Agreement on 24 October 2007.

The ITER Council is the supervisory body of the ITER Organization, responsible for the overall direction of its activities. Council delegates elected Sir Chris Llewellyn Smith, Chairman of the Consultative Committee for Euratom on Fusion, as its Chairman. He thanked the Council stating: "This meeting is a truly important day for fusion and for mankind, as it marks a major step towards the availability of fusion as an environmentally responsible source of essentially limitless energy." Academician Evgeny Velikhov, President of the Russian, Kurchatov Research Institute, and one of the originators of the ITER project, was appointed as Vice-Chairman.

The ITER Council formally appointed Kaname Ikeda as Director-General of the ITER Organization. He thanked Council for the great honour of being named as first Director General of ITER and asked: "...the members of Council and the representatives of the Domestic Agencies for statesmanship and vision in the years to come as ITER, being a unique venture, cannot be a success without being able to come to creative and visionary solutions for challenges that we have never faced together before." Norbert Holtkamp was named as Principal Deputy Director-General along with six Deputy Director-Generals.

The Director-General reported on the progress of the project since the July 2007 meeting of the Interim ITER Council. He focused on site preparation, the build-up of the project team, finance and accounting, and the development and deployment of project management tools. He also presented cooperation agreements with IAEA and the European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN), and the Principality of Monaco. The Council also approved the Draft Budget of the ITER Organization for 2008.

Much attention was paid to the results of the ITER Design Review and engineering activities. The Council acknowledged the successful completion of the year-long review, led by the team that will build ITER, aimed at updating the 2001 Baseline Design. The Council commended the efforts of the ITER Organization and all the participants in the review from ITER Members.

Chairman Sir Chris Llewellyn Smith said that the first meeting of the ITER Council was "a turning point" for the project: "The design review showed that the ITER design is fundamentally sound, although the implications of some design choices and changes need to be studied further in the coming months. The stage is now set for major procurement activity in ITER members as well as the beginning of construction on the ITER site."

Notes for editors:

More information on the ITER project and fusion energy can be found on www.iter.org

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BACKGROUND TO THE NEWS RELEASE

ITER will be the world's largest experimental facility to demonstrate the scientific and technical feasibility of fusion power. Fusion is the process which 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 and economically viable, with abundant and widespread fuel resources.

The ITER project is sited at Cadarache in the South of France. The construction costs of the facility are estimated at 5 billion Euros over ten years, most of which will be awarded in the form of contracts to industrial companies and fusion research institutions. Europe will contribute roughly half of the costs of its construction, while the other six Parties to this joint international venture (China, Japan, India, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the USA), will contribute equally to the rest.

Each Party has set up a Domestic Agency to organize and carry out procurement of their in kind contributions to ITER. The Domestic Agencies employ their own staff and have their own budget and will place contracts with suppliers.