

Fusion for ITER project

The operative words here are 'could' and 'might' produce energy, but the main use of ITER is as a nice international practical research project for training engineers. It is very unlikely, after the fusion research of the last 60 years, to produce useful energy. It does not have the right basic physics yet.

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The seven international parties involved in the ITER project have initialled an agreement to start work on an experimental fusion reactor in southern France.

The project will be the world's biggest scientific collaboration of its kind, involving countries representing over half the world's population from the European Union, Russia, Japan, China, India, South Korea and the United States. Representatives of all the parties engaged in the project met in Brussels last week to confirm the agreements negotiated over the past year, following the decision to site the reactor at Cadarache in southern France.

ITER contends fusion **could** produce safer, more environmentally friendly energy with no nuclear waste disposal **problem but it probably will not**.

"This is a truly crucial moment, for the ITER project and for global scientific cooperation in general," said European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik, who hosted the meeting. "Together we are forging a new model for large-scale global scientific and technical co-operation. We are sending an important message about seeing the value in working together to address our common challenges."

The initialling of the agreements brings to an end a long and complex negotiation process. Now each partner will confirm the adoption of the agreement according to their national laws and practice. Iter anticipates that all parties will have completed the process by the end of 2006, which, once all necessary construction permits have been obtained for the site, will mean actual construction can start in 2007.