

This historical decision was announced by DOE Secretary Abraham during his remarks to employees of the Department's Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory.

The United States will be working with the other Participants in the ITER Negotiations on the Agreement and is preparing to participate in the ITA.

As Secretary Abraham said in his remarks, the US proposes to provide a number of hardware components for ITER construction, to be involved in the project construction management and to participate in the ITER scientific research and technology development. The nature and details of the US participation and contributions would be determined during the negotiations. DOE's Office of Science, which has extensive experience in large, international programs, will lead US negotiations on ITER.

## **PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA JOINS ITER** **by Prof. HUO Yuping, Zhengzhou University, People's Republic of China**

The People's Republic of China is the largest developing country with a projected population of 1.6 - 2 billion people and an energy consumption growing from the current 1.3 Billion Tons Coal Equivalent (TCE) to more than 4 Billion TCE by 2050. This large demand needs to be accommodated in a sustainable way, requiring energy generation in an environmentally friendly way. Fusion is one of the most promising candidates to solve this important issue.

This explains why in the second half of 2002, the ITER Participants' delegations to the ITER Negotiations received expression of interest from the People's Republic of China in the possibility of Chinese participation in ITER, including joining the ongoing Negotiations.

Subsequently, the exchange of views on that matter was the subject of an informal meeting of the ITER Parties' legal experts with Chinese representatives held in Beijing on 25-26 November 2002. As a follow-up to this meeting, it was decided at the Seventh ITER Negotiations Meeting (Barcelona, 9-10 December 2002) to agree to the Chinese request to be given a copy of the seventh draft agreement, taking into account the PRC's commitment to join the ITER Negotiations.

In January 2003, an official technical delegation from the ITER International Team and Participant Teams visited China's plasma physics laboratories and relevant industries in Beijing, Hefei, Cheng-du and Xi'an. The visitors were impressed by the dynamism and optimism shown by all the scientists met and by their strong wish to participate in ITER. It should be noted that the history of fusion in China goes back to the 1950's when Magnetic Confinement Fusion research was first started at the Institute of Atomic Energy in Beijing.

Equipment and methods in use in the laboratories and industries visited were similar to those in the more developed countries. In particular, quality assurance programmes were implemented in a manner that already satisfies European and Japanese customers. It was clear that the Chinese would be able to make an in-kind contribution of satisfactory quality to ITER construction.

The speed with which the Chinese authorities had made their decision to participate in the ITER Negotiations was impressive. The Prime Minister and the State Council had already confirmed their decision to apply to join ITER as soon as possible, and Mr. Xu Guanhua, Chinese Minister of Science and Technology, wrote on behalf of his government, on 10 January 2003, to the four heads of delegation in the ITER Negotiations, requesting that China participate in the present ITER Negotiations, pointing out that China intends to provide a substantial contribution to the Project, comparable to what is currently envisaged by some of the participants in the present Negotiations.

Therefore, a Chinese delegation will participate in the forthcoming Eighth Meeting of the Negotiators in St. Petersburg in February.