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26th ITER Council: Ready for machine assembly

ST PAUL-LEZ-DURANCE, France (18 June 2020) – The ITER Council has convened to review the performance of the ITER Project toward First Plasma in 2025. The Council evaluated the progress of manufacturing, construction, and assembly with particular attention to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on project progress. Project execution to achieve First Plasma is now about 70% complete.

At its Twenty-Sixth Meeting on 17-18 June 2020, the ITER Council for the first time in its history convened via remote videoconference, a necessary measure reflecting the current state of the ongoing pandemic. The Council assessed the latest progress reports and project performance metrics, including preliminary assessments of the impacts of the pandemic on project progress. Despite these impacts, the project has so far largely managed to continue its vigorous pace and robust performance with respect to critical activities, both at the ITER worksite in Provence and in manufacturing centres in Member countries.

china

eu

india

japan

korea

russia

usa

Continuity plan under COVID-19 conditions: The Council commended the ITER Organization (IO) and Domestic Agencies (DAs) for their rapid development and implementation of a continuity plan under COVID-19 conditions. The main pillar of this plan was the prioritization of critical activities needed to preserve the overall integrity of ITER's closely integrated project schedule while ensuring the health and safety of staff and collaborators and a rigorous adherence to hygienic measures. The Council noted that, to date, there have been no instances of COVID-19 infection on the ITER worksite.

Physical progress on First-of-a-Kind components and readiness for Assembly Phase: The Council noted, with appreciation, the number of project achievements since its last meeting, including multiple First-of-a-Kind components that have been five or more years in fabrication.

- In March, the European Domestic Agency, Fusion for Energy, completed the unification of the Assembly and Tokamak Buildings, enabling the 750-tonne overhead cranes to transport components into the Tokamak Pit.
- The first two toroidal field coils, from Japan and Europe, arrived at ITER in April. The third from Japan has also arrived in France.
- The first poloidal field coil (PF6), procured by Europe in collaboration with China, has arrived in France. PF5 is also nearing completion at ITER.
- The first vacuum vessel sector, fabricated in Korea with port stubs supplied by Russia, was completed in April and will arrive at ITER next month.
- In May, Korea completed the final elements of the thermal shield.
- The cryostat upper cylinder was completed and placed in storage in April. Later this month, India will celebrate the completion of all elements of the Cryostat.
- In May, the 1,250-tonne cryostat base was successfully lifted, transported from the Assembly Hall to the Tokamak Building, and positioned in the Tokamak Pit, with a precision of 3 millimetres as specified.



Impact of COVID-19 pandemic: The Council took note of the IO's preliminary assessment of the impact of the pandemic on different work-streams of the project: design, manufacturing, construction, assembly, and administration. IO and DAs have maintained productivity on administration and design, as well as the critical activities mentioned above. However, the extended shutdowns in manufacturing some key components in affected countries, and the slowdown in some assembly activities might have potential consequences for the project schedule. The Council will review a follow-up report at its next meeting in November.

ITER Member support: The Council noted the efforts made by the Members to meet their in-kind and in-cash commitments to enable the successful implementation of the construction strategy on schedule, despite the impacts of the pandemic. However, the ITER Council also stressed the need for those Members having concerns in fulfilling their financial commitments to take immediate measures, as their full and timely contributions are vital to maintaining the integrated project schedule.

2019 Management Assessment: The Council reviewed the report of the 2019 ITER Management Assessor, noted the globally positive outcome of this exercise, and invited the IO and DAs to consider the recommendations to ensure the ITER Project is performing according to the highest standards of international project management in the new Assembly Phase. The Council will review, at its next meeting, the action plan to address the recommendations of this report.

Council Members reaffirmed their strong belief in the value of the ITER Project mission and vision to develop fusion science and technology, and resolved to work together to find timely solutions to facilitate ITER's success. The Council congratulated the One-ITER Team on the commitment to effective collaboration that has put the project on the path to success. The Council will continue to monitor project performance closely, and to provide the support needed to maintain this pace of achievement.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRESS RELEASE

ITER—designed to demonstrate the scientific and technological feasibility of fusion power—will be the world's largest experimental fusion facility. Fusion is the process that 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 safe, abundant and environmentally responsible energy source.

ITER is also a first-of-a-kind global collaboration. Europe is contributing almost half of the costs of its construction, while the other six Members to this joint international venture (China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the USA), are contributing equally to the rest. The ITER Project is under construction in Saint-Paul-lez-Durance, in the south of France.

For more information on the ITER Project, visit: <http://www.iter.org/>