

IAEA General Conference
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Statement by Laban Coblenz on behalf of the ITER Organization

On behalf of the ITER Organization and Director-General Bernard Bigot, I would like to offer my thanks to IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi and the IAEA governors and delegations for this opportunity to address you regarding the global progress of hydrogen fusion research and the status of the ITER project.

As you will recall, the IAEA has been a parent organization to the ITER Project. In recent years, our relationship has expanded to greater cooperation on educational activities, knowledge management, and public outreach – including the highly successful hosting, with the French Atomic Energy Commission, of the IAEA Fusion Energy Conference earlier this year. ITER has also pledged to share its valuable experience on fusion safety, radiation protection, and nuclear licensing with the IAEA and its Member States.

This information from ITER, as the first industrial scale fusion device, will in turn give the IAEA a central role to play in the development and propagation of international guidelines on multiple aspects of hydrogen fusion. IAEA leadership can greatly facilitate the establishment of fusion globally as a source of safe, environmentally friendly, virtually unlimited, and concentrated baseload energy for future generations.

Regarding ITER Project progress, I am pleased to report that we have now reached 75% of total construction through First Plasma. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, we have steadily progressed on construction and manufacturing, entering Assembly Phase in mid-2020. Several First-of-a-Kind components have already been delivered successfully from three continents: cryostat elements from India, vacuum vessel sectors from the Republic of Korea, and superconducting magnets from China, Europe, Japan, and the United States, with another to arrive soon from Russia. These advances give us confidence that the demanding specifications needed for hydrogen fusion can, in fact, be achieved. The resulting technological innovations also create spin-off effects that benefit other fields, from medicine and robotics to manufacturing and materials science.

Above all, the ITER Project is a tangible demonstration that multinational collaboration is possible at a practical level, with countries that are not always aligned on all items, but at ITER are working hand-in-hand toward a common goal: to leave a better legacy with regard to clean energy supply for our children and future generations. This practical collaboration will be needed on many fronts as we work globally to confront the challenges of climate change; and it is truly a manifestation of Atoms for Peace and Development.

Thank you.