

## **ITER pioneers receive prestigious Russian energy prize**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June in Saint Petersburg, three pioneers of the international fusion project ITER received the Russian prize “Global Energy” from Vladimir Putin, president of the Russian Federation. The laureates — the Russian academician Evgeniy Velikhov, the Japanese Dr. Masaji Yoshikawa and the French Dr. Robert Aymar — received the award for their contributions to the development of the scientific and technological foundation of the ITER project. As of 2003 the Global Energy prize has been awarded annually for outstanding theoretical, experimental and applied research, development, innovations and discoveries in the fields of energy and power generation.

In his speech during the prize ceremony, President Putin said: “I will emphasize that as one of the world’s energy leaders Russia is not only engaged in exporting energy resources and electricity. We intend to continue supporting scientific research that will increase the efficiency and security of energy production. Russia, the United States, the European Union, Japan, Canada, China, India and South Korea have united their efforts towards creating an essentially new energy source. As far as I know, this is the first time that a collective prize has been awarded. Dear gentlemen, this confirms the unique value of your joint scientific research.”

The laureates will share the prize money of 1.1 million US dollars. The prize is financed by the Russian oil companies Gazprom, UES of Russia, and Yukos, and is awarded by an international award committee. The award ceremony today was part of the tenth Economic Forum, which was opened by President Putin in Saint Petersburg earlier today. Evgeniy Velikhov is one of the founders of the ITER project. During summit meetings in 1985 between Mikhail Gorbachev, then President of the Soviet Union, and Presidents Mitterand of France and Reagan of the USA, he urged the participants to embark on the ITER project as an international collaboration among the leading fusion programmes of the world. Academician Velikhov is now president of the Kurchatov Institute in Moscow, and responsible for fusion research there.

During his career, Dr. Masaji Yoshikawa has played a leading role in the Japanese fusion programme. He led the construction and operation of JT-60, one of the largest and most successful fusion experiments in the world and was President of the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute (JAERI).

Dr. Robert Aymar became ITER director in 1994, and leader of the ITER International Team in 2001. The present design of the device was largely developed under his leadership. In 2004 Dr. Aymar left the ITER project to become Director General of CERN.

The award committee of the prize consists of thirty scientists from nine different countries, including three Nobel Laureates and other leading scientists. The oil companies are not involved in the selection process.

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