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EU prepares strategy to secure ITER for Europe

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EU Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin appealed to the media on 16 June to 'spread the word' that 'Europe is best' to host the international thermonuclear experimental reactor (ITER).

A battle over where the ten billion euro reactor should be built has been raging between Japan and the EU since the end of 2003. 'Things haven't yet gone up in flames, but there is certainly some competition,' said Mr Busquin. In attempt to break the deadlock, Japan is reported to have offered an extra 100 billion yen (750 million euro) in order to secure ITER.

Mr Busquin explained that several European ministers held an informal meeting on 14 June where they discussed the EU's position in preparation for the next international meeting, in Vienna, on 18 June. 'Ministers accepted that they could live with room for manoeuvre if that meant that we could defend Europe and ITER in Vienna,' said the Commissioner, suggesting that a counter bid from the EU is a distinct possibility. He also spoke of putting ITER in a 'broader approach' to nuclear fusion.

Of the nine criteria used in a scientific assessment of the two proposed sites, one in Cadarache, France, and the other in Rokkasho-mura, Japan, eight were favourable to the French site, and the ninth, on transport facilities, was questionable, said Mr Busquin. 'The media should pass on the idea that Europe is best. The European plant is best,' he added.

For further information on ITER, please visit:
<http://www.iter.org>

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