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## ITER: Washington supports the Japanese candidature publicly

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**The European Union, Russia and China support the French site of Cadarache, while the United States, Japan and South Korea prefer that to him of Rokkasho-Walled, in Japan.**

The United States took a position, Friday January 9, for the first time publicly, in favour of Japan in the highly disputed case of the future experimental fusion reactor, ITER, affirming that the Nipponese site of Rokkasho-Mura rank "technically above" its French rival of Cadarache.

"I am proud to affirm that the United States vigorously supports the construction of ITER in Japan", affirmed in Tokyo the American secretary with energy, Spencer Abraham, in front of the Japanese business leaders. "From a technical point of view, you offer a higher site. Rokkasho is perfectly well placed to receive large materials necessary for ITER," it complimented. "Your technical skills and of engineering are known and admired whole world", underlined Mr. Abraham.

It is the first time that an American leader also clearly states, in public, the support of the United States for the Japanese candidature. "We are extremely encouraged by his comment", said a delighted person in charge for the Japanese ministry by sciences and technology. "We will continue to work with other countries so that we can build ITER with Rokkasho-Mura" he said.

The American declaration caused a sharp reaction of the European Commission. "It is inappropriate and inopportune to make such statements at the time when a procedure of evaluation is in hand. That could disturb the exercise", declared the Philippe Busquin (Head of EU research), quoted by his spokesman Fabio Fabbi.

French side, one stresses that complementary technical studies are in hand, to succeed at the end of January, and that "the speech of the American secretary is a contestable way to disturb the analysis". "One will not lead to a solution which shows that on the technical level one of the two sites is higher than the other", explained a source in Tokyo close to the case.

### CLIMATE OF PROVENCE

The French Minister of Research, Claudie Haigneré, however sought to minimize the range of these remarks: "It is without surprise. There is no new element, perhaps an expression a little more open than until now", M<sup>me</sup>Haigneré declared, referring to the known position of Washington in favour of Japan and against the European choice of Cadarache (Rhone delta), in France. The large Japanese borough of Rokkasho-Mura, 11 000 inhabitants, which includes six villages, is located in the prefecture of Aomori, in the North-East of the archipelago, at the edge of the Pacific Ocean. The site contains already a nuclear plant reprocessing, which should be completed in July 2006, a center of storage of vitrified waste, a factory of uranium enrichment and a center of storage of waste of weak activity.

On its side, France plays the chart of "its expertise as regards nuclear power" and of the "exceptional" climate of Provence to allure the countries

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implied in the project (European Union, Russia, China, the United States, South Korea and Japan).

The partners of ITER met first once in Washington on December 20 to try to choose in a consensual way the country host, but without managing an agreement. A second meeting is envisaged in February. The EU, Russia and China supports Cadarache, while the United States, Japan and South Korea prefer to him Rokkasho-Mura. Following this failure, France stated the desire "to work out a proposal for a co-operation" with Japan.

The Japanese minister responsible for the project, Takeo Kawamura, should fly away next Wednesday for South Korea, China and Russia in order to praise the nipponne candidature there.

Certain French leaders estimate that the American choice is explained by a will "to punish" France for its attitude during the Iraqi crisis. Japan, for its part, agreed to send soldiers in Iraq.

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