

**Speech by Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for Science and Research,
European Commisison**

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Presidents, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

I would like to first thank all of you, and especially both presidents for being here today. Your presence signifies the importance of this event for all parties; for France as a host state; and for the European Union as the host party.

The ITER Project has been of great personal interest to me and I must say that I feel fortunate to have been able to be involved directly.

It is a beacon of scientific and technological excellence. I applaud the scientists and engineers whose brilliance and sustained commitment over the two decades have brought the project to its present state of maturity.

ITER has also been a truly demanding exercise in diplomacy and patience on the part of all those involved in the bringing the negotiations to completion. These intensive efforts should not go unremarked.

For one, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have worked hard in past years, be they in this room today or in their offices or homes.

Yes, there has been hard work and we have experienced some difficult times;

But as was mentioned at our meeting in Moscow last year "hard winds grow strong trees".

And in the process I believe that we have managed to build an invaluable fund of mutual confidence in our capacities to address together the big issues that affect us all.

After the pleasure of this ceremony, it is now time to get down to the daily work necessary for delivering this Project. I look forward to starting our joint endeavours for ITER at the first meeting of the interim ITER Council this afternoon.

And I truly hope that we can use the experience that we are gaining in working together on ITER to extend our boundaries in other domains.

Thank you.