



Department of Energy
Office of Science
Washington, DC 20585

March 4, 2003

Open Letter to U.S. Fusion Energy Sciences Community:

Dear Colleagues:

A few weeks ago President Bush decided that the U.S. should join the ongoing ITER Negotiations and directed Secretary Abraham to implement this decision. As a result, a U.S. delegation attended the eighth meeting of the negotiators in St. Petersburg, Russia some days ago.

A major part of this meeting in Russia was to inform the two new participating nations, namely, U.S. and China, of the work to date and the work now under way to realize this complex project. The ITER Parties have worked hard over these nearly sixteen months since their first meeting in November, 2001, to address the full range of associated issues.

What we learned was that there has been significant progress in many of the formal topics, such as intellectual property rights, privileges and immunities, and liabilities. At the same time, however, the discussions on the topics of keen interest to our technical community, such as allocation of component responsibilities, procurement processes, and management systems, structures and approaches, are at an early stage of discussion.

In general, we learned that there is a significant amount of work for us to do to become fully engaged in the ongoing efforts, noted above, that are aimed at reaching agreement for the project, at completing preparations to enable a smooth start as soon as an agreement is reached, and at undertaking the remaining technical tasks during the current ITER Transitional Arrangements period.

Therefore, I believe we must create a working mechanism to help us get started immediately. As soon as we are able to get over this initial, steep learning curve, we will revisit this mechanism to assess how it might need to be improved or modified.

Once a construction agreement is approved, we will need a different set of skills and a more formal national arrangement. But, for these upcoming meetings leading to an agreement and for the concurrent ITER-related work, we need to take action now.

At present our only formal ITER-oriented activity is that of a modest cost-estimating task intended to support our involvement with the Negotiations. Ned Sauthoff has been leading this effort as well as continuing his earlier work in coordinating our international collaboration planning.

Consequently, I am asking Ned to expand his role and to serve as U.S. ITER Planning Officer, with Charles Baker as his deputy, and to form a multi-institutional working team of people from around our program to assist us in meeting these many needs. This working team will involve a broad range of people from across the country to address our technical and organizational needs as determined by OFES in light of the ongoing Negotiations. Ned and Charlie will work with Michael Roberts in my office on these matters.

We have also asked Ned to assemble a Burning Plasma Program Advisory Committee to strengthen community involvement in the working team's activities. He is doing that and has asked Stewart Prager to chair this committee, which will have a broadly based membership.

I believe that this two part mechanism will assist us in trying to meet the daunting challenges posed by the President's decision while trying to fulfill the FESAC recommended Burning Plasma strategy to the extent possible.

I encourage each of you to become involved in this major effort toward burning plasmas; you can contact OFES staff as well as any of the members of the working team and the BPPAC. Ned and Charlie will make those names available shortly.

Sincerely,

/s/

N. Anne Davies
Associate Director
for Fusion Energy Sciences
Office of Science