

ITER fusion project names French nuclear official as new chief



ITER, the €13 billion international fusion reactor under construction in France, has chosen Bernard Bigot, chair of France's Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), as its next director-general. Bigot will replace Osamu Motojima and will begin his 5-year term next June.

Bigot, 64, studied physics and chemistry and defines himself as a nuclear expert. He has held senior positions in government, academia, and industry and was appointed as head of CEA in 2009. With a staff of more than 16,000, CEA is a technology research organization and is responsible for maintaining France's nuclear deterrent.

Despite such strong experience, taking on leadership of ITER is not an enviable position. The project is an enormous undertaking involving seven international partners—China, the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States—with components being manufactured in hundreds of plants all across the globe. The project is [years behind schedule and hugely over budget](#). Motojima, the second ITER director-general, was [heavily criticized in an external management review](#) completed earlier this year.

“Mr Bigot has had a long and distinguished career and a history of close involvement with ITER—he was one of the high-level supporters at the time France applied to host the ITER Project and has been the High Representative for ITER implementation in France. He is an experienced manager of large

projects, a leader who is able to find common ground, an excellent communicator, and he is highly respected in the fusion community,” Motojima said in a statement today.

Bigot said: “I am fully aware of the large responsibility that it will be to lead the ITER Project as it enters a new phase. I am deeply honoured by the trust of the ITER Council and will do my utmost to fulfil the expectations of the Council and of all the people involved in ITER.”