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EC Commission Seeks Authority on Cooperative Research Agreement with US on Nuclear Fusion

The Commission of the European Communities (EC) today asked the EC's Council of Ministers for authority to negotiate a cooperative research agreement with the US in the field of controlled thermonuclear fusion, a potential clean, safe and virtually inexhaustible source of nuclear energy.* On March 2, 1983 the US informed the Commission that it was ready to begin discussions towards a cooperative accord. The idea of such an agreement was evoked at meetings between EC Commission Vice President Etienne Davignon and Dr. G. Keyworth, scientific adviser to US President Ronald Reagan. The principle of international cooperation in the field of fusion was a focus of discussion by a special working group set up by the 1982 Summit of Industrialized Nations held in Versailles.

The Commission said cooperative activities between the EC and US should include exchanges of information and visits, meetings and personnel exchanges among EC and US experts, as well the participation of one side in certain types of projects and experiments conducted by the other. It said US-EC cooperation would be particularly useful in three main areas: tokamaks, alternatives to tokamaks and technology for the magnetic confinement of the fusion reaction. The tokamak is one type of magnetic confinement system.

*Fusion is the source of the sun's energy. The fusion process creates tremendous amounts of energy by joining the nuclei of two light atoms, such as hydrogen atoms. Scientists hope that the energy created by the fusion of these nuclei eventually can be harnessed to generate electrical power. Fusion is not expected to become an economically viable power source until after the turn of the century.