



Representatives of the four signatory parties on July 21, 1992, sign the international agreement design plan for an International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER). Signers (L to R) are Viktor Mikhailov of Russia, Hiroshi Hirabayashi of Japan, Andreas van Aagt of the Commission of European Communities, and Admiral Robert Watkins. Standing (L to R) are Akihiro Aoki of Japan, Helen Donoghue of the European Communities, Michael Roberts of the U.S. Department of Energy, and Anatoliy Shurygin of Russia. Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Department also sought to reprogram funds from the Burning Plasma Experiment to design work on the Tokamak Physics Experiment, a steady state tokamak reactor. In addition, the Department pledged to continue and increase participation in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor program. This multi-billion-dollar joint effort with the European Community, Japan, and the Russian Republic envisions the construction of an international test reactor to be completed about 2005. The Department's long-range strategy foresees an operating demonstration plant about 2025 and an operating commercial plant about 2040.¹⁷⁰

NUCLEAR POWER

Expectations that Admiral Watkins with his background in the nuclear navy would be a strong advocate of nuclear power were not disappointed. On March 28, 1989, the tenth anniversary of the Three Mile Island accident, Watkins stressed the administration's commitment to a strong and viable nuclear power industry. The Nation, he declared, was at a "crossroads" at which it "must push beyond the threshold into a new era of nuclear progress." Technological "know-how" was not the problem according to Watkins. Rather, the promise of nuclear power was limited by

a "political consensus that continues to stifle a commitment to move forward."¹⁷¹

Watkins immediately moved to challenge this consensus. In one of his first public appearances after becoming secretary, he denounced efforts by New York State officials to acquire and dismantle the recently completed Shoreham nuclear power plant on Long Island. State and local officials did not believe that the 810-megawatt Shoreham plant, which had been built at a cost of nearly \$6 billion, could be operated safely. Noting the serious concerns in the Northeast with electricity supply, Watkins declared that "it is very difficult for me to understand, as a nuclear trained person who came from a very strict environment, how we could do something like this." Two days later in a Long Island newspaper editorial page column entitled "The Shoreham Deal Is Stuff and Nonsense," he said that "to move ahead on the dismantling of Shoreham would be utterly irresponsible." In his first press conference, Watkins pledged to do "everything within my power" to prevent the dismantlement. "There is no way I will give up on this battle," he asserted. "I plan to get myself involved every step of the way. If activists can stop something from being built, then, by God, I can try to prevent something from being torn down."¹⁷²