

Visit of France's former fissile material production facilities for nuclear weapons



France organised a visit of its former fissile material production facilities at Pierrelatte and Marcoule on 16 September 2008 for representatives from over 40 Member States of the Conference on Disarmament, on 16 March 2009 for non-governmental experts, on 3 July for international journalists.

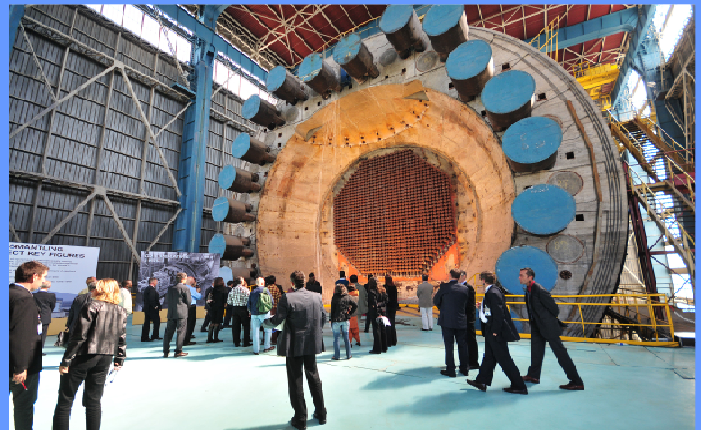
The visit fulfils an undertaking the President of the French Republic made in his 21 March 2008 Cherbourg speech on defence policy, nuclear deterrence and disarmament. In his speech, the French President set out new proposals concerning disarmament. He also expressed his will for transparency by deciding to invite international experts to come and see that the facilities at Pierrelatte and Marcoule - formerly dedicated to producing fissile material for nuclear weapons - had effectively been dismantled.

France : the first Nuclear-Weapon State to open the doors of its former facilities dedicated to the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Participants visited the former uranium enrichment plant at Pierrelatte and one of the three plutonium-producing reactors and the military reprocessing plant at Marcoule. They were able to see that France's 1996 decision to cease all production of fissile material for its nuclear weapons and dismantle its dedicated production facilities at Pierrelatte and Marcoule had been concretely and effectively implemented.



Pierrelatte enrichment plant



G2 reactor at Marcoule

This unprecedented gesture of transparency also marks France's determination to continue contributing actively and concretely to disarmament at not only national but also international level. At the urging of the French Presidency of the European Union, Europe was able for the first time to draw up ambitious initiatives for disarmament. With a view towards the NPT Review Conference of 2010, Europe presented an action plan on disarmament based on the Cherbourg speech proposals. This action plan was endorsed by the EU's 27 Heads of State and Government in December 2008.

In its action plan on disarmament adopted in view of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the European Union calls for the opening without delay and without preconditions of negotiations for a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and the introduction of an immediate moratorium on the production of such material. The EU has also called all States concerned to dismantle their facilities dedicated to the production of such material.

France now hopes that the international community will join the European Union in supporting and implementing this concrete and realistic action plan, which is based on trust, transparency and reciprocity. All States must be committed if any progress on disarmament is to be made.