

“THE OUTCOMES OF NEGOTIATIONS ON IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM IN THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXT”

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Yesterday the United States was supposed to submit a draft resolution to the Security Council. This resolution was developed in parallel to the talks by the same team of negotiators. It has 13 paragraphs and from the legal point of view it's a very complicated text, very sophisticated: like a very [colorful] Persian carpet it can be admired. This resolution seeks to endorse and to give legal force to the joint comprehensive plan of action, and together with this resolution a statement from the six countries is going to be adopted, which specifies the common understanding of the steps which have to be taken with a view to input and to the plan of action. And this resolution is not yet publically available; I don't think, however, that it is going to take long before it is adopted, because it was co-sponsored by the P5 + 1, that is the permanent members of the security council and Germany. Iran also supports this resolution, and once this resolution has been adopted, it is going to give a harmonic background to the resolution of this Iranian nuclear problem.

And right now, I believe, at this note, I can end my remarks, and we can pass to the Q&A session, and it's really interesting to listen to the comments of colleagues who are present here today, who we [present] with this retelling of events which might be a little bit boring to you.

Q: What in your view will be the most difficult obstacles for the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and what regional implications for the very unstable Middle East should we expect? Did recent developments in the region facilitate the deal?

A: As to the obstacles to implementation, there are many, and they are not to be underestimated. First, the United States Congress will now have to review the deal. As you know, the *Corker Bill* provides for a very rigorous procedure under which the U.S. Administration has to report to the Congress, and theoretically, the Congress can block any agreement. In this case, the U.S. President can veto this decision but even then the Congress could obtain a two-third majority to override the President's veto.

According to our estimates, in order to sustain his veto the President will need 34 votes, and these votes are now going to be fought for by very influential players, lobbyist

structures, media, think-tanks. We're going to closely follow that struggle. A situation where the Security Council takes a decision but de facto the future of the deal depends on how the Congress votes is nothing short of a conflict of laws and a political dilemma. It was very difficult to find proper wording in the agreement but the solution that was eventually reached is acceptable to all. Under the current arrangement, the Security Council is not dependent on the vote of the United States Congress, which would be unacceptable, at the same time the U.S. legislators are free to make their own decision.

The second issue we will have to deal with is the removal of nuclear materials from Fordow facility and reconfiguration of Arak reactor. We have agreed upon general framework of work, allocated responsibilities and decided on the sequence of actions, but there hasn't been a feasibility study of the reactor's reconfiguration, nor a contract for the removal of nuclear material from Fordow facility. Everything that could be done without violating the existing sanctions regime has been done. We are in constant contact with Iranians, everyone understands that in order to move forward we need the resolutions imposing sanctions to be withdrawn. After it happens, we can start working on the substance of the matter. It isn't going to be an easy ride. We don't think of it as of a commercial venture, but we are not going to do charity either. The project will be self-sustaining; no budget funding will be allocated. This is a difficult task, but I'm confident that Russian Foreign Ministry and *Rosatom* will find a good solution.

As to the reconfiguration of Arak, this is not our job. The reactor was designed by China. Similar reactor is operated in Algeria, and there is a number of countries that have a deeper knowledge of this technology and are, hence, better positioned to deal with the matter. However, initially it was *Rosatom*, who came up with a technical solution for the heavy-water reactor in Arak. The principle of operation will remain unchanged but Iran will not be able to produce significant amounts of weapons-grade plutonium. You all know that any reactor produces plutonium, they only difference is its quality and quantity.

As for the regional implications, the answer depends on whether you are an optimist or a pessimist by nature. There are revisionists who criticize every provision in the document and believe that it is detrimental to their interests; others see the same document as a ray of hope. So, all depends on one's past experiences, habits and propensity to self-promotion.

If we look at the matter using the Cartesian reasoning, we shall see there are no reasons to expect any drastic changes of the situation in the region, on the oil market or as regards Iran's role in the Middle East. We have charted the course of gradual evolution. I believe all actors and stakeholders are going to look at the situation from two angles: first, look for new opportunities, and second, follow issues that require attention and make sure their own interests are met.

The evolutionary path will not lead to sensations, but this is the only possible way forward given the history of the issue, endless delays, the composition of the negotiating group as well as the positions of our colleagues, sometimes conflicting. The holistic approach of all parties and their efforts to bridge the differences between Russia and China on the one hand, and our Western partners on the other definitely contributed to reaching the deal. It will certainly be interesting to follow the developments in the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia that was following the process with anxiety and suspicion, just like other countries of the Gulf. Besides, Israel criticizes the deal harshly. We understand the underlying motives, but are still waiting to hear what specific parts of the deal are problematic or unacceptable. It looks like it is difficult for the opponents of the JCPOA including Iran's detractors in the Middle East to find specific arguments against the deal. This in itself proves that the advocates of the new deal are in the right. As time goes by, Iran will play a more constructive, open and clear role in regional affairs. At the last week's BRICS outreach meeting in Ufa with SCO members and observers as well as members of the Eurasian Economic Union President Rouhani made a statement that was quite remarkable in terms of both tonality and substance. It was a statement by a country determined to act as a responsible international actor.

The regional situation had no significant bearing on the negotiations. Everyone focused on specific issues. Certainly, when arms embargo or sanctions relief were discussed, we inevitably remembered Iran's support to different Shia groups in the Middle East, but this was just one of many arguments, not a factor that could accelerate or, to the contrary, delay the process. I would not say that regional aspects had any bearing on the negotiations.

Q: The rumor has it that the United States offered to Russia some kind of a swap, a compromise on certain issues in exchange for Russia relenting its position on the Iranian nuclear program. How would you comment on that?

A: Looking at our position I would not say any element of it was softened or that we diverted from our fundamental principles. On the contrary, I would say that it is thanks to the full implementation of Russia's position that we managed to arrive at the deal.

As to any swaps with regards to Iran's nuclear program, my answer is negative – there haven't been any. Nor did we receive any proposals from the United, either behind closed doors or publicly, not even a slightest hint. I don't believe that the United States ever considered this as an option, or we could have considered any deal like that. Numerous participants to the process each have their own agenda, which makes such swaps impossible. Moreover, any such deal would eventually surface and bring parties to it under harsh domestic criticism. Besides, swaps are never fair.

Q: Russia agreed to remove excessive enriched nuclear material from Iran, what are the conditions?

A: We have agreed on a nuclear fuel-swap deal, under which Russia will remove excessive enriched nuclear stockpile (currently around 8 metric tons above the limit for the material enriched up to 5%) in exchange for the equivalent quantity of natural uranium. We are yet to look at all costs involved but the initial analysis shows that it can be done in a sustainable manner.

First of all we need to take samples of the Iranian material and do quality tests, which is impossible under the existing sanctions regime. We will do it as soon as the new UNSC resolution is adopted. Most probably the Iranian material will become part of the low enriched uranium reserve in Angarsk.

Q: Many countries, Israel in particular, do not trust Iran. What are the mechanisms for monitoring and verification?

A: We have developed one of the most elaborate and multilayered systems of monitoring and control ever. First of all, Iran agreed to immediately start provisional application of the Additional Protocol, which is considered by the vast majority of the international community to be a gold standard in the field of monitoring and identification of undeclared nuclear material or undeclared nuclear activities in any country.

The Additional Protocol, inter alia, enables IAEA to request a visit to any site, location or facility after giving specific reasons for seeking such a visit. This is called managed access, but in fact it provides IAEA unlimited access to any facility.

Besides, the Iranian side agreed to begin immediate application of the so-called modified Code 3.1 to its Subsidiary Arrangements with IAEA, which requires a country to share well in advance the design information on any nuclear-related facilities including NPPs the country in question plans to build or rebuild. Everything a country intends to do needs to be shared with and previewed by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Moreover, according to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, apart from the standard application of Additional Protocol and modified Code 3.1, Iran has agreed to a regime, which may be described as AP+. It involves installing sensors and cameras in sensitive areas and granting access to some facilities on which the information previously provided by the Agency to Tehran has been considered insufficient. Furthermore, the Iran-IAEA framework document on past military dimensions provides for visits, samples taking, further information sharing, etc. This goes well beyond what is required from any other country, and I believe Iran will implement its commitments under the JCPOA fully. For this reason, Russia made special emphasis during these negotiations on including a provision in the agreement and in the prospective UN Security Council resolution stating, that this case should not set precedent. It is unique and *sui generis* and should not be considered as a point of reference for any other situations or places. This extraordinary arrangement was needed because of mistrust between Iran and many regional players,

between Iran and European Union, between Iran and the U.S. In our view, it should be regarded as an extraordinary case, and it should not be applied anywhere else, so we are glad that such formulas of no precedent-setting have been approved and included in the texts of both the core agreement and the draft resolution despite Iran's objections.

Q: Are additional political or technical measures outside the current agreement needed to promote transparency and verification, or is the JCPOA sufficient?

A: Access and transparency were among the most difficult issues during the talks, both emotionally and politically. We managed to strike a good balance. Under the current agreement, the IAEA or individual countries will be able to get full information and perform all the necessary checks and inspection, while Iran will not have to disclose its entire military program. That is with the exception of the nuclear program, which will be subject to full and comprehensive control.

Looking ahead, we will focus at building confidence and trust between Iran and the international community could go beyond the scope of the JCPOA or the UN Security Council resolution that will be adopted soon. For instance, we need to resolve the outstanding CTBT issue; Iran might allow reconnecting the existing monitoring station to the International Data Center in Vienna. I am confident that Iran will never produce a device that would need testing, but the very fact that they may eventually connect the station located on their territory to the IDC would send the right message and create yet another verification tool. The monitoring system will be comprehensive, and there are no gaps, no stone has been left unturned, everything has been considered over and over again. Skeptics will have a hard time finding grounds for criticism apart from emotions and the very fact that the contracting party is the Islamic Republic of Iran.