

Which will IAEA Board of Governors opt for?



By Ebrahim Beheshti
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Many experts predict that in the upcoming meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Gov-

ernors, no resolution will be issued against Iran. Reza Faraji-Rad, an international affairs expert and former Iranian ambassador to European countries, is among these experts. In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, he has emphasized that there is no evidence or indications of European or American preparations to put forward a resolution against the Islamic Republic.

The IAEA's 35-nation Board of Governors will convene in Vienna starting today, September 11. One of their agenda items is the verification and inspection of Iran's nuclear activities under UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the review of the implementation of the safeguards agreement.

IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi is expected to present his report on Iran's nuclear work during the quarterly session. In recent days, the media have disclosed some confidential sections of this report.

According to media reports, while there are concerns about Iran's deviation from its nuclear activities under the 2015 nuclear deal and its restriction of the agency's full access to some nuclear facilities, which is a recurring pattern in the IAEA's reports, it has been emphasized that Iran's production of uranium enriched to up to 60% has slowed to around 3 kg a month from about 9 kg a month previously and its stockpile of enriched uranium has shrunk.

Reuters, in its reports, has emphasized that while the slowdown of 60% uranium enrichment in Iran does not necessarily imply a limitation on the country's nuclear program, it could contribute to easing tension between Tehran and Washington.

Promoting or undermining cooperation?



Iran's active diplomacy

The BG session is taking place in a context where Iran, through its active diplomacy in recent months, is experiencing calmer days in the international arena. Tehran's efforts to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia have contributed to regional rapprochement.

After becoming a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Iran has also joined the ranks of the BRICS club of emerging nations. Furthermore, following marathon indirect talks with the United States, a deal has been hammered out in which prisoners are exchanged between the two countries, and \$6 billion of Iran's frozen assets in South Korea have been released.

In addition to these developments, some media outlets and analysts are speaking of an unwritten deal between Tehran and Washington, in which both countries are working to manage existing tensions and prevent things from spiraling out of control. Both parties also emphasize their readiness to continue negotiations to lift sanctions on Iran.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has recently stressed that talks with the United States to bring Washington back to the 2015 nuclear deal will continue under the framework of the "September Document," which refers to direct negotiations between Iran and the remaining parties to the

troubled deal, known as the P4+1, as well as indirect talks with the US that were halted last year.

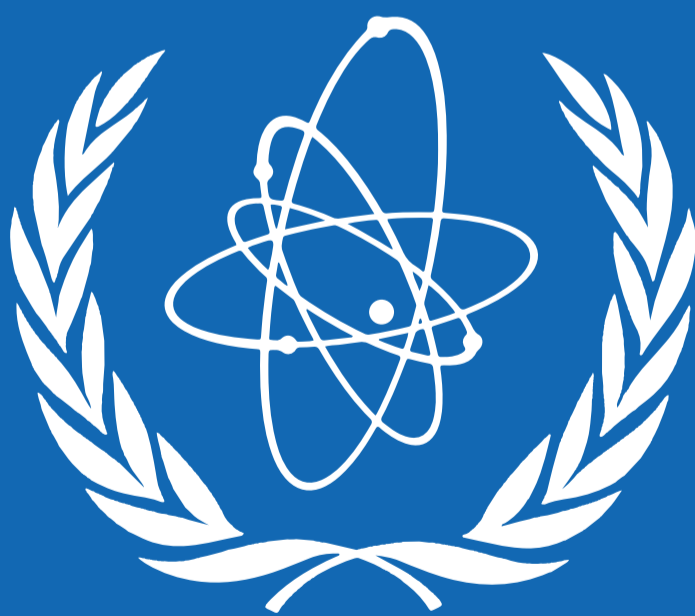
Alongside these diplomatic developments, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and the IAEA have resumed their cooperation after a short hiatus, and it appears that parts of the agency's report regarding the slowdown of 60% purity of enrichment and the reduction of uranium stocks are related to this cooperation.

All of these developments indicate that, in addition to its primary approach to foreign policy based on an East-oriented perspective, the Islamic Republic has not overlooked pursuing a balanced foreign policy, including negotiations with Western actors, de-escalating tensions and settling disputes.

This diplomatic path is apparently set to be further developed on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York later this month. Iran's negotiating team will reportedly hold discussions with the P4+1 with indirect participation of US diplomats in New York.

In addition, the foreign ministers of the Persian Gulf countries, including Iran, will sit down for talks in New York under the initiative of the United Nations. Besides, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will have meetings with the leaders of the countries attending the UN General Assembly.

Iran and the US are working to prevent things from spiraling out of control. Both parties also emphasize their readiness to continue negotiations to lift sanctions on Iran.



IAEA

The 35-nation Board of Governors, especially the European members and the United States, are not apparently willing to walk on a destructive path they previously went down.



Why BG session is crucial?

The BG meeting, the IAEA director-general's report on Iran's nuclear activities, and the members' response to Grossi's report are crucial for several reasons. They can either disrupt the positive trend of understanding and cooperation, or pave the way for the continuation of this process. As observed in previous quarterly meetings of the IAEA's Board of Governors, destructive actions by the so-called European Troika (Germany, France and Britain) and the United States, along with their efforts to pass anti-Iran resolutions, had negatively impacted the dialogue and cooperation between Iran and the agency, and Tehran's negotiations with the P4+1 representatives. For example, in the BG's meeting last year in June, in response to the issuance of a resolution against itself, Iran switched off several IAEA surveillance cameras operating in its nuclear sites beyond the JCPOA terms. However, it now appears that the 35-nation Board of Governors, especially the European members and the United States, are not inclined toward walking on such a destructive path.

"Contrary to previous meetings, there is no indication of an anti-Iranian campaign or behind-the-scenes negotiations to pressure Tehran on the eve of the BG session," Faraji-Rad told Iran Daily. Referring to the positive diplomatic developments in the past few months and, especially, the understanding between

Iran and the United States, he rules out the possibility of a resolution against Iran at the forthcoming BG gathering. Faraji-Rad considers the slowdown in Iran's 60% enrichment as a positive move for Western nations, particularly the United States, and notes, "Like Iran, the United States is interested in continuing negotiations to lift sanctions and bring Iran's nuclear activities back to the JCPOA limits. Additionally, Washington has no interest in fueling tensions with Iran, at least until the US presidential elections."

This international affairs expert believes that the BG meeting and the discussions surrounding Iran can be a catalyst for fostering future cooperation and negotiations.

"On the fringe of the United Nations General Assembly, while I doubt that a meeting at the presidential level between the nuclear deal parties will take place, nuclear negotiations, especially potential talks between Iranian and American representatives, could significantly advance the course of events," Faraji-Rad explains. Therefore, the Board of Governors and the IAEA director-general should be careful so as to not fall under the influence of opposing lobbies against Iran. They should also refrain from revisiting previous tried-and-tested actions to pressure Tehran under politically motivated pretexts if they are interested in strengthening cooperation with Iran and reaching agreements.