

Iran stresses need to preserve Caspian Sea for future generations

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian emphasized the need to preserve the environment and resources of the "strategic" Caspian Sea for the next generations. Addressing a meeting of foreign ministers of the Caspian Sea littoral states in Moscow, Russia, on Tuesday, the Iranian top diplomat said that the sea is a common heritage, a center of friendship, and a source of blessings for more than 270 million people of the Caspian Sea countries.

Amir-Abdollahian said the Caspian Sea is considered as a strategic region due its geographical location which links the North-South and East-West corridors.

He also said that the coastal countries are responsible for maintaining stability, security, and sustainable development in the sea. The Iranian foreign minister said that any decision about Caspian Sea issues should be agreed by all five littoral states, stressing the need for the establishment of a secretariat to manage and monitor cooperation among the coastal countries.

He said that using the capacities of the Caspian Sea without taking into account the interests of other coastal



(L-R) Foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan pose for a family photo during the annual meeting of the Caspian Sea littoral states in Moscow on December 5, 2023.
● URI KOCHETKOV/POOL/AFP

countries would violate the rights of others.

To turn the sea into the symbol of friendship and development, the countries need to strengthen their interaction and cooperation, Amir-Abdollahian said.

Before departing Tehran, Amir-Abdollahian took to his X social media account and stressed the importance of regional cooperation in addressing shared challenges.

"Cooperation and collective participation is of paramount

importance considering the diverse economic opportunities and environmental challenges in this region," he said.

Boosting cooperation

Moscow expects cooperation between the Caspian Sea countries to get a boost following the Third Caspian Economic Forum to be held in Tehran, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"It is important to note that the Caspian issue is a priority

for all of us, as it is regularly discussed by the presidents and heads of government of the Caspian Five.

A serious impetus for cooperation in this format was given during the Sixth Caspian Summit in Ashgabat last June and the Second Caspian Economic Forum in Moscow last October," he said. "We expect further strengthening of this course on the basis of the results of the Third Caspian Economic Forum to be held in Tehran," the top Russian

diplomat pointed out. The Caspian Sea is the world's largest closed inland reservoir surrounded by Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan. Iran has attached high priority to the consolidation of relations with neighboring countries in the region, clinching landmark agreements and entering international economic coalitions as part of the Islamic Republic's policy of confronting Western unilateralism.

Tehran-Moscow deal

After the Caspian Sea meeting, the Iranian foreign minister held a separate meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, during which the two countries signed an agreement to make joint efforts to counter unilateral sanctions.

"We have just signed a declaration on ways and means to counteract, mitigate and compensate for the negative consequences of unilateral coercive measures," Lavrov

said. The Russian minister said this was an important step to "overcome the illegal sanctions that the United States and its allies have made as a substitute for diplomacy."

The agreement has officially been titled the Declaration of the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran on ways and means of countering, softening and compensating for the negative consequences of unilateral coercion measures, according to a report by Russia's state-run TASS news agency. Iran and Russia have already made joint efforts to reduce the impacts of Western sanctions on their economies.

The cooperation increased in early 2022, when the United States and its allies imposed a raft of sanctions on Russia for its war in Ukraine.

Iran has been under US sanctions since 2018, when the then administration in Washington withdrew from a deal on Iran's nuclear program.

Iran rejects UK claims of involvement in attacks on vessels

National Desk

Iran rejected "unfounded" allegations made by the UK government over Tehran's role in resistance groups' attacks against Israel and US targets in the region.

Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that the British government tries to achieve its special political goals by making such allegations. He said that London is trying to distort the

realities of the region.

A British government spokesperson on Monday claimed that Iran bears responsibility for the actions of the resistance groups in the region.

"As we've previously stated, Iran has long provided military and political support to Houthi militants and it bears responsibility for the actions of its proxies and partners," the British spokesperson said in a statement.

Britain also condemned

attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Yemeni forces, saying that the UK is committed to ensuring the safety of shipping in the region.

Three commercial vessels came under attack in international waters in the southern Red Sea on Sunday, in attacks claimed by Yemeni forces. Yemen said it had launched drone and missile attacks against two Israeli ships.

Kanaani underlined that the resistance groups do



● IRNA

not receive orders from Tehran. He said that the resistance groups decide and act based on their own principles, priorities, and interests of their countries. Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations also strongly condemned the "baseless" accusations leveled at

Tehran by a British minister concerning the Middle East crisis, saying the UK's 1917 Balfour Declaration caused the suffering of the Palestinian nation.

In letters sent to the UN chief and the Security Council's president on Tuesday, Amir Saeid Iravani firmly rejected "base-

less" claims by British Minister of State for the Middle East Tariq Ahmad at the United Nations Security Council's Wednesday meeting on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question."

The Iranian envoy said that during the meeting, the UK minister overlooked "his own country's responsibility in the current situation in the Middle East and the UK's destabilizing policies, attempted to shift blame onto the Islamic Republic of Iran."

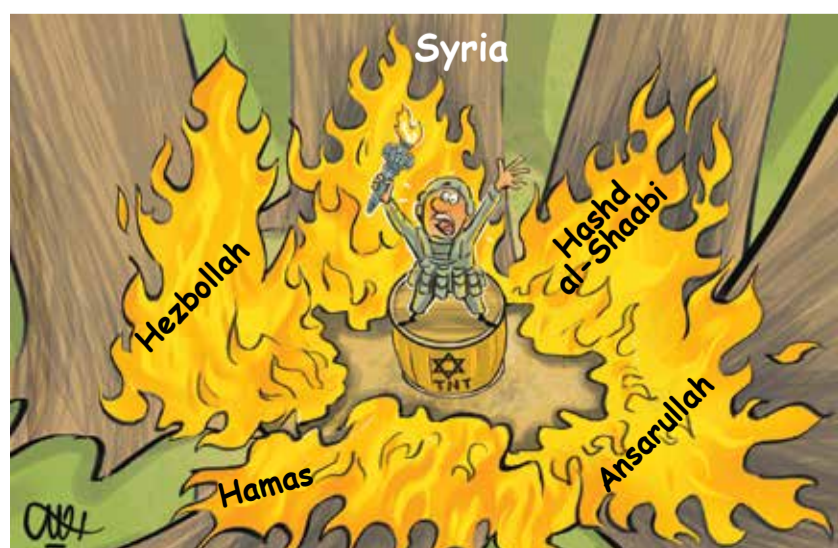
"Undoubtedly, the United Kingdom has certainly played a pivotal role in the prolonged suffering and distress endured by the Palestinian people. The ominous roots of this plight can be traced back

to the Balfour Declaration, signaling the commencement of nearly a century of hardship for the Palestinians," he stated, referring to the document that set the stage for the occupation of Palestine.

Iravani also noted that the UK's "consistent and unwavering support for Israeli atrocities and genocidal aggression against the Palestinian people and regional countries markedly diminishes its moral authority to license judgment on the intentions and policies of others."

In his address to the Security Council, Ahmad alleged that Iran "poses an unacceptable threat to the region through its destabilizing activity and long-term support for its proxies and partners."

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Raisi to visit Russia Thursday

National Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will travel to Moscow on Thursday for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin as the two countries strengthen economic and military ties in the face of Western sanctions.

Heading a high-ranking political and economic delegation, the Iranian president will visit Russia at the official invitation of his Russian counterpart.

Iran's official news agency IRNA had earlier reported on the planned visit, saying that the two leaders

would discuss "bilateral issues, including economic interactions, as well as discussions about regional and international issues, especially the situation in Gaza, [which] will be high on the agenda of the one-day trip."

"I can confirm. There will be Russian-Iranian negotiations on December 7," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday when asked about media reports.

Raisi's visit will come a day after Putin travels to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday

for talks on energy and regional politics.

Putin visited Iran in July last year and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov travelled to Tehran in October

for talks with regional counterparts.

The visit by Raisi will be the Iranian president's second visit to Russia after he took office in August 2021.



● IRNA