

# Russia, China call on US to drop Iran sanctions, restart talks on 'mutual respect'

## International Desk

China and Russia stood by Iran on Friday after the United States demanded nuclear talks with Tehran, with senior Chinese and Russian diplomats saying dialogue should only resume based on "mutual respect" and that all sanctions ought to be lifted. In a joint statement issued after talks with Iran in Beijing, China and Russia also said they welcomed Iran's reiteration that its nuclear program was exclusively for peaceful purposes, and that Tehran's right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be "fully" respected.

"(China, Russia and Iran) emphasized that the relevant parties should be committed to addressing the root cause of the current situation and abandoning sanction, pressure or threat of force," China's Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu told reporters after the meeting.

China, Russia and Iran also emphasized the necessity of terminating all "unlawful" unilateral sanctions, Ma said. Ma's meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi came days after Tehran rejected US requests for resumption of dialogue over the nuclear program. Last week, Trump said he had sent a letter to Iranian officials, proposing nuclear talks, adding that, "There are two ways Iran can be handled: militarily, or you make a deal." Trump's letter was delivered to Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday by Anwar Gargash, a diplomatic adviser to the president of the United Arab Emirates. Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday that Iran will conduct a "thorough assessment" before responding to the letter.

## No negotiations under pressure

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Tuesday that he would not negotiate with the US while being "threatened," and Iran would not bow to US "orders" to talk. Pezeshkian sharply rebuked the Trump administration's maximalist approach toward Iran, declaring that Iran is not Ukraine and it will not negotiate with the US under threats or coercion. "We must maintain relationship with the world. We do not want to be estranged or quarrel with anyone, but that does not mean we will bow in humiliation before anyone," Pezeshkian said. "We may die with honor, but we will never live in disgrace." In February, Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei also urged the government not to negotiate with the US, citing Washington's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal.

In 2015, Iran agreed to curb its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions in a deal with the US, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany. But in 2018, Donald Trump, a year into his first term as US president, pulled out of the pact. In recent months, Tehran and Washington have expressed their interests in new negotiations to resolve the standoff over Tehran's nuclear program. However, Iranian officials became skeptical after Trump restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran in February, which includes efforts to drive its oil exports down to zero in order to stop it from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

## 'Peaceful' nuclear program

"The Iranian nuclear program is peaceful in nature," said Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Gharibabadi on Friday. "It is under the surveillance of



Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov (L), China's Executive Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ma Zhaoxu (C) and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi hold a press conference after their meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on March 14, 2025.  
LINTAO ZHANG/AFP

the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iran is receiving huge inspections from the IAEA, and our nuclear program has never been diverted to non-peaceful purposes."

The main root cause of the current situation is the unilateral US withdrawal from the 2015 pact, Gharibabadi said.

China hopes all parties will meet each other halfway and resume dialogue and negotiations as soon as possible, Wang told the Iranian and Russian ministers separately after the trilateral meeting. The United States should show "sincerity" and return to talks with Iran as soon as possible, said Wang.

## Envoy: UNSC meeting 'unwarranted interference' in Iran-IAEA cooperation



Amir Saeid Irvani

## International Desk

Iran condemned a recent UN Security Council's meeting on its nuclear program, calling it an "unwarranted interference" in its ongoing cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Amir Saeid Irvani in a statement on Thursday described the Wednesday's meeting as a "blatant political maneuver" which misuses the world body in an attempt to "advance narrow agendas." "We strongly object to this provocative and unwarranted meeting. This is not a legitimate discussion on non-proliferation—it is a blatant political maneuver and a misuse of the Security Council to advance narrow agendas," he said. "Such actions set a dangerous precedent that undermines the Council's credibility,"

he added. The closed-door meeting on Tehran's nuclear program, initiated by the UK, France and Germany at Washington's request, came a few days after the IAEA Board of Governors made its observations about Iran's nuclear issue.

## UK snapback threats

After the meeting, the UK — which called for the meeting along with the United States, France, Greece, Panama, and South Korea — indicated that Iran's actions could trigger the snapback of UN sanctions. "We categorically reject the baseless claims made by the United States, the United Kingdom and France. These countries have conveniently ignored the reality that they themselves are responsible for the current situation." Irvani said the Security Council meeting had been held for discussing purely technical issues and thus fall exclusively within the mandate of the IAEA, which were just discussed last week at the Board of Governors in Vienna. "There is no legitimate basis for Security Council involvement," the statement said, calling it "an unwarranted interference in the ongoing, constructive engagement between Iran and the IAEA." "It serves only one purpose: to continue the failed and unlawful policy of maximum pressure against Iran," Irvani said, refer-

ring to US President Donald Trump's policy of targeting the Islamic Republic since taking office. Irvani said it was the US that unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear agreement in 2018 in direct violation of Security Council Resolution 2231 and reimposed illegal sanctions, punishing the Iranian people. "And it was the United Kingdom, France and Germany, European parties to the JCPOA that, instead of upholding their obligations, chose to appease Washington by failing to implement their commitments," he added. "The Security Council must not be exploited by those who openly defy its resolutions while demanding that others adhere to them," Irvani said. Also on Thursday, Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it summoned the diplomatic representatives of the UK, France and Germany to convey its "strong protest at the irresponsible and provocative approach" of the three countries in convening the closed-door UN Security Council meeting on Tehran's nuclear program. There was "no technical or legal justification" for the meeting, the statement said, calling it "provocative and political, in line with the unilateral and nervous approach of the United States." The three European envoys said they would convey Iran's protest to their respective governments.

## Tehran welcomes Armenia-Azerbaijan agreement on peace deal

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei welcomed the news of an agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the terms of a peace agreement between the two republics, describing it as a necessary and important step towards achieving lasting peace in the South Caucasus region. The spokesperson expressed hope that with the commitment of Azerbaijan and Armenia to resolving disputes through dialogue and diplomacy, the world would soon witness the signing of a peace agreement between the two countries and lasting peace and stability in the region. Azerbaijan and Armenia said Thursday that they had wrapped up talks aimed at resolving the Caucasus neighbors' decades-long conflict, with both sides agreeing on the text of a possible treaty. A deal to normalize ties would be a major breakthrough in a region where Russia, the European Union, the United States and Turkey all jostle for influence. Baku and Yerevan fought two wars for control of Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated region of Karabakh, at the end of the Soviet Union and again in 2020, before Azerbaijan seized the entire area in a 24-hour offensive in September 2023.



Esmail Baqaei

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have repeatedly said a comprehensive peace deal to end their long-standing conflict is within reach, but previous talks had failed to reach consensus on a draft agreement. "The negotiation process on the text of the peace agreement with Armenia has been concluded," Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov told reporters. "Armenia has accepted Azerbaijan's proposals on the two previously unresolved articles of the peace treaty," he said. Armenia's Foreign Ministry later confirmed that in a statement, saying, "Negotiations on the draft agreement have been concluded" and "the Peace Agreement is ready for signing." Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan hailed it as an "important event," saying Yerevan was "ready to begin discussions on the place and time for signing the peace agreement." "We believe this text is a compromise, as a peace agreement should be," he told reporters.

## Iran-Afghanistan economic ...

### Breaking through sanctions, strengthening foundations

**Page 1 >** To seriously address Western sanctions and foster economic relations, infrastructure development is vital. Joint efforts in enhancing transportation and communication infrastructure will improve Afghanistan's economic and trade status, while Iranian engineering expertise can fulfill Afghanistan's needs without reliance on the West. This could involve the development of railways, roads, and communication systems. In the current critical period, Afghanistan's rulers need to consider regional interests, particularly those of their neighbors. History has shown that the policies of extraterritorial actors in Afghanistan have led to instability and unrest, ultimately resulting in conflict and hindering the country's progress. Countries with high political risk struggle to attract foreign investment, making their paths to economic development challenging. Focusing on economic diplomacy can play a significant role in improving the economic situation and effectively

countering the sanctions faced by both Iran and Afghanistan. By identifying the existing opportunities and challenges in their economic relations, the groundwork for paving the way for Afghanistan's development through the Islamic Republic of Iran is increasingly being laid. As a regional power with substantial energy reserves and advanced scientific knowledge in engineering and modern sciences, Iran is a crucial neighbor for Afghanistan. Notably, Iran's policies towards Afghanistan consistently aim to secure the interests of the Afghan people, showing a genuine intent to support developments in the country. It is also vital for Afghan leaders to understand their neighbors' interests. For example, the issue of Iran's water rights from the Helmand River, a contentious topic in bilateral relations, can be addressed within this framework. Increased trade and commercial cooperation, joint investments, and scientific and technological collaborations can serve as incentives for Afghanistan's development, requiring proper interactions and a realistic understanding of existing realities by Afghanistan's leaders.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

