

The Iran Project Statement on the Announcement of a Framework for a Comprehensive Nuclear Agreement with Iran

April 6, 2015

We welcome the announcement that the U.S. government and other major world powers have reached a framework accord to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

This achievement is the result of the sustained effort of the Foreign Ministers of seven governments spanning nearly 18 months, to put in place a set of constraints and inspections that would limit Iran's nuclear program to peaceful purposes.

While technical details are still to be fully resolved, important U.S. objectives have been achieved:

- uranium enrichment only at the Natanz plant and no enrichment at the underground facility at Fordow;
- prohibition of the Arak heavy water research reactor from producing weapons grade plutonium or reprocessing to recover plutonium from spent fuel;
- a reduction and then a limit on Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium to 300 KG for 15 years; broad and sweeping inspections and other constraints;
- a two-thirds reduction in installed centrifuges for ten years; a range of limitations and inspections that will be in force over a 10-25 year period and some permanent inspections of the program.

We recognize that full evaluation must await a final comprehensive agreement. Important, difficult, and ambiguous issues still remain. Their resolution will be key to the solidity of the final agreement and its support in this country. They include:

- what means will be used to limit the stockpile of Iran's enriched uranium to 300 Kg of LEU for 15 years;
- how the existing UNSC resolutions sanctioning Iran will be replaced by a resolution or resolutions that creates an approved procurement channel and places restrictions on conventional arms and ballistic missiles;
- what will be the set of measures that will address the IAEA's concerns regarding the possible military dimensions (PMD) of Iran's program;
- what scale of uranium enrichment will be possible for Iran after ten years;

- what will be the relationship between the lifting of sanctions and Iran's performance;
- what is the system for evaluating the severity of violations of the agreement and how would they trigger the snap-back of sanctions.

The framework will be examined and interpreted differently in the United States and Iran over the next three months. These negotiations have been among the most complex diplomatic efforts in recent history. Nevertheless, we believe the framework represents important progress toward our goal of blocking an Iranian nuclear weapon.

In view of this hopeful progress, we call on the U.S. Congress to take no action that would impede further progress or undermine the American negotiators' efforts to complete the final comprehensive agreement on time. The Congress should examine the announced framework, asking itself whether the potential for a comprehensive, verifiable accord is preferable to the current standoff with Iran or other alternatives as a means to ensure that Iran will not acquire a nuclear weapon.

We, the undersigned, have devoted our careers to the peace and security of the United States in both Republican and Democratic administrations. Presidents and Congresses over the past 20 years have joined in a bipartisan policy of sanctioning and isolating Iran to bring it to the negotiating table and prevent nuclear proliferation. There has been bipartisan understanding that the U.S. would lead any negotiations to test Iran's seriousness. Both political parties can deservedly take credit for bringing us to this moment.

We urge a renewed bipartisan effort based on the following principles:

First, before members of Congress or its committees decide to act on this matter, we urge them to hold hearings so that the framework can be fully discussed and debated. Congress should be closely involved in the oversight, monitoring and enforcement of the implementation of a final agreement. The Executive Branch should consult regularly with Congress so that it can play its important role in implementation. After a final agreement is reached, Congress will play a central role, as removal of most sanctions will require Congressional action.

Second, a decision to exert more pressure and sanctions now would most likely cause the negotiations to be broken off and rule out a final agreement.

Third, members of Congress and America's leaders have an obligation to their nation to review the consequences of undermining the ongoing negotiations or blocking the chances of reaching a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The repercussions could be grave, including creating the perception that the U.S. is responsible for the collapse of the agreement; unraveling international cooperation on sanctions; and triggering

the unfreezing of Iran's nuclear program and the rapid ramping up of Iranian nuclear capacity. Such a situation could enhance the possibility of war.

Finally, we hope that the Administration will place the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in a strategic context by assuring America's partners, especially Israel, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States, that the U.S. remains strongly committed to their security and that it will continue to take a firm stance against threatening Iranian actions in the region.

We will continue to work with others – skeptics and supporters alike – to support a balanced, objective, and bipartisan approach to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon — one that enhances U.S. national security and that of our friends and allies of the region.

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