

3 February 2010

West 'pushing for new UN sanctions against Iran'



Iran says it only wants nuclear power for peaceful purposes

Western diplomats are circulating a discussion paper proposing further UN sanctions against Iran over its nuclear programme.

The measures include expanding travel bans and asset freezes on people connected with the nuclear industry.

The move comes despite Iran's apparent acceptance of a deal to send most of its low-enriched uranium abroad in return for research reactor fuel rods.

Washington has called on Iran to match its words with actions.

Last month, diplomats said Iran had informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it did not accept the terms of the deal and had instead demanded a simultaneous exchange on its territory.

The US and its allies fear Iran is attempting to develop nuclear weapons. Iran insists its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.

Preliminary discussions

On Wednesday, a Western diplomat confirmed reports that the discussion paper being circulated by the US talked about expanding travel bans and asset freezes on those connected to Iran's nuclear industry, as well as financial measures such as placing restrictions on its banks.

ANALYSIS



Paul Reynolds,
BBC world affairs correspondent

If President Ahmadinejad's comments are followed up by an Iranian approach to the IAEA stating that it is ready to negotiate on a uranium deal, then the whole picture would be changed.

Up to this point, Iran has said that it wants major changes to the proposed deal, which would make it unacceptable to the US and its allies.

If, on the other hand, he is saying this now as a way of undermining the current discussions on increasing sanctions on Iran, there would be no progress.

As always with Iran, it is difficult to assess its policy from one statement. But at least there is some hope.

In particular, it suggested targeting senior members of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), which oversees Iran's nuclear programme and its strategic weapons, they said.

The BBC's Barbara Plett, at UN headquarters in New York, says this is very much a preliminary stage, as the US and its European allies on the Security Council would have to eventually win agreement from Russia, which has been reluctant to pursue sanctions, and China, which openly opposes them.

An apparent policy shift in Iran also complicates things, she adds.

On Tuesday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran would have "no problem" sending most of its low-enriched uranium abroad so it could be processed into fuel, as envisaged by a deal struck in October between Iran, the IAEA and the so-called P5+1 - the US, Russia, China, UK, France plus Germany.

"We have no problem sending our enriched uranium abroad," he said.

"We say: We will give you our 3.5% enriched uranium and will get the fuel. It may take four to five months until we get the fuel."

"If we send our enriched uranium abroad and then they do not give us the 20% enriched fuel for our reactor, we are capable of producing it inside

Iran," he added.

NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE

Mined uranium ore is purified and reconstituted into solid form known as yellowcake

Yellowcake is chemically processed and converted into Uranium Hexafluoride gas
Gas is fed through centrifuges, where its isotopes separate and process is repeated until uranium is enriched

Low-level enriched uranium is used for nuclear fuel

Highly enriched uranium can be used in nuclear weapons

[In depth: Nuclear fuel cycle](#)
[Iran launches satellite rocket](#)

Our correspondent says the US, UK, France and Germany are now waiting to see if this is Iran's official position - suspicious that it is a tactic to stall for time.

A White House official earlier told the BBC: "If Mr Ahmadinejad's comments reflect an updated Iranian position, we look forward to Iran informing the IAEA."

The British Foreign Office also said that it "looked forward" to Tehran notifying the IAEA.

The French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, meanwhile suggested the Iranians were stalling and said he was "perplexed and even a bit pessimistic" about Tehran's offer.

His German counterpart, Guido Westerwelle, told reporters that Iran had to be "measured by its actions, not by what it says" and that it was up to Iran to "show an end to its refusal to negotiate".

Moscow gave a guarded response to the Iranian offer, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov saying it would welcome Iran's acceptance of the scheme.

The UN Security Council has already imposed three rounds of sanctions against Iran in an effort to force it to stop all uranium enrichment activities and heavy water projects.

3 February 2010

US wary as Iran president agrees nuclear deal terms



Iran's nuclear programme has alarmed Western powers

The US has reacted warily after Iran appeared to accept a deal to swap enriched uranium for nuclear fuel.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran would have "no problem" if most of its stock was held for several months before being returned as fuel rods.

The US said that if this was a new offer, it was "prepared to listen".

Soon after the statement, Iranian state TV announced the successful launch of a satellite rocket carrying an "experimental capsule".

The West is concerned about Iran's growing missile technology and possible links to its nuclear programme.

Iran insists its nuclear development and rocket programme are entirely peaceful.

ANALYSIS



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BBC world affairs correspondent

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Up to this point, Iran has said that it wants major changes to the proposed deal, which would make it unacceptable to the US and its allies.

If, on the other hand, he is saying this now as a way of undermining the current discussions on increasing sanctions on Iran, there would be no progress.

As always with Iran, it is difficult to assess its policy from one statement. But at least there is some hope.

A deal struck in October between Iran, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the so-called P5+1 - the US, Russia, China, UK, France plus Germany - envisaged Iran sending about 70% of its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France where it would be processed into fuel for a research reactor.

But last month, diplomats said Iran had told the IAEA that it did not accept the terms of the deal and had instead demanded a simultaneous

exchange on its territory.

Then, in a state TV interview on Tuesday, President Ahmadinejad dismissed the concerns of his "colleagues" that the West would retain the uranium.

"We have no problem sending our enriched uranium abroad," he said.

"We say, 'We will give you our 3.5% enriched uranium,' and will get the fuel. It may take four to five months until we get the fuel."

BBC Tehran correspondent Jon Leyne, reporting from London, says there will still be scepticism about whether President Ahmadinejad's offer is anything more than a delaying tactic designed to fend off fresh sanctions.

In an initial reaction to the comments, US State Department spokesman P J Crowley said the US was "not prepared to change the deal. We are not interested in renegotiating it".

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Highly enriched uranium can be used in nuclear weapons

In depth: Nuclear fuel cycle

Iran 'launches satellite rocket'

In a later response, a White House official told the BBC: "If Mr Ahmadinejad's comments reflect an updated Iranian position, we look forward to Iran informing the IAEA."

The official added: "If Iran has something new to say, we are prepared to listen."

Mr Ahmadinejad also said there were negotiations about a possible prisoner swap for several Iranians jailed in the US for the three American hikers currently being held in Iran.

"There are some talks under way to have an exchange, if it is possible," he said. "We are hopeful that all prisoners will be released."

Mr Ahmadinejad did not go into detail, but in December Tehran released a list of 11 Iranians it says are being held in US prisons, including a nuclear scientist who disappeared in Saudi Arabia and a former defence ministry official who vanished in Turkey.

The US has denied any knowledge of their whereabouts.

3 February 2010

Iran president Ahmadinejad accepts nuclear deal terms



Iran says it only wants nuclear power for peaceful purposes

Iran's president has said it is ready to send its enriched uranium abroad for further enrichment under a deal to ease concerns about its nuclear programme.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told state TV that Iran would have "no problem" if most of its stock was held for several months before being returned as fuel rods.

Correspondents say that such a decision would be a major shift in Tehran's position.

The US said that if this was a new offer, it was "prepared to listen".

Last month, diplomats said Iran had informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it did not accept the terms of the deal and had instead demanded a simultaneous exchange on its territory.

The US and its allies fear Iran is attempting to develop nuclear weapons. Iran insists its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.

'Definitive answer'

The deal agreed in October between Iran, the IAEA and the so-called P5+1 - the US, Russia, China, UK, France plus Germany - envisaged Iran sending about 70% of its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France, where it would be processed into fuel for a research reactor.

“ If we send our enriched uranium abroad and then they do not give us the 20% enriched fuel for our reactor, we are capable of producing it inside Iran ”

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

But for months, Iranian officials publically criticised the terms and said they were unwilling to export the uranium without simultaneously receiving fuel in return. The proposal proved unacceptable to the West.

But in a television interview on Tuesday, President Ahmadinejad dismissed the concerns of his "colleagues" that the West would not return the uranium, saying Iran would respond by producing more.

"We have no problem sending our enriched uranium abroad," he said.

"We say: We will give you our 3.5% enriched uranium and will get the fuel. It may take four to five months until we get the fuel."

"If we send our enriched uranium abroad and then they do not give us the 20% enriched fuel for our reactor, we are capable of producing it inside Iran."

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In depth: Nuclear fuel cycle

In an initial reaction to Mr Ahmadinejad's comments, US state department spokesman P J Crowley said the US was "not prepared to change the

deal. We are not interested in renegotiating it. If Iran wants to accept it then they should inform the IAEA".
But a later response from the administration stressed that "if Iran has something new to say, we are prepared to listen".
BBC Tehran correspondent Jon Leyne, reporting from London, says that even now there will be scepticism over whether this Iranian change of heart really means anything.
The US is pressing hard for new sanctions against Iran because of the nuclear programme, so this could well just be a case of the Iranian government playing for time, trying to weaken forces lined up against it, he says.

Hikers

In his interview, Mr Ahmadinejad also said there were ongoing negotiations about a possible prisoner swap for several Iranians jailed in the US for the three American hikers currently being held in Iran.

"There are some talks under way to have an exchange, if it is possible," he said. "We are hopeful that all prisoners will be released."



Who are the US hikers?

Mr Ahmadinejad did not mention any specifics, but in December Tehran released a list of 11 Iranians it says are being held in US prisons, including a nuclear scientist who disappeared in Saudi Arabia and a former defence ministry official who vanished in Turkey. The US has denied any knowledge of their whereabouts.

"I had said I would help in releasing them, but the attitude of some of the US officials damages the job," he said. "There are a large number of Iranians in prison in the US. They have abducted some of our citizens in other countries."

However, US National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer told Agence France-Presse news agency: "We have not entered into any discussion with Iran about an exchange."

The three Americans - Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal - were hiking in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region in July when they accidentally crossed the border, their families have said. Iranian prosecutors say they have been accused of spying.

Earlier, US Vice-President Joe Biden warned that Iran's leaders were "sowing the seeds of their own destruction" by suppressing the opposition protests that followed the disputed re-election of Mr Ahmadinejad in June.

"The people of Iran are thinking about, the very people marching, they're thinking about regime change," he told MSNBC.

01:22 GMT, Wednesday, 20 January 2010

Iran 'rejects nuclear fuel deal'



Iran has told the International Atomic Energy Agency it does not accept the terms of a deal to ease concerns about its nuclear programme, diplomats say.

For months, the Iranian government has criticised the offer to ship low-enriched uranium abroad in return for fuel, but never responded formally.

But diplomats say Tehran is now suggesting an alternative involving a simultaneous exchange on its territory.

Correspondents say the proposal is very unlikely to be acceptable to the West.

The US and its allies fear Iran is attempting to develop nuclear weapons. Iran insists its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.

"I am not sure that they have delivered a formal response, but it is clearly an inadequate response"

P J Crowley

US state department spokesman

The BBC's Bethany Bell in Vienna says it is not clear whether Iranian officials have responded in writing or only verbally to the IAEA about the deal that envisages Iran sending about 70% of its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France, where it would be processed into fuel.

But diplomats say they appear to have rejected one of the main conditions - that all the uranium leaves Iran well before any fuel is dispatched.

When asked about the reports on Tuesday, a US state department spokesman said Iran's proposal was inadequate.

"I am not sure that they have delivered a formal response, but it is clearly an inadequate response," P J Crowley said.

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In depth: Nuclear fuel cycle

"I am not sure that whatever they have done, perhaps today, is any different than what they have done previously."

Neither officials at the IAEA nor Iran's representative to the organisation, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, have so far commented.

The US and its allies on the UN Security Council have been pushing for a fourth round of sanctions if Iran rejects the deal.

But Russia and China are said to be sceptical of any new penalties.

6 January 2010

China again rejects UN sanctions against Iran



Iran says its nuclear programme is for civilian purposes

China's ambassador to the United Nations, Zhang Yesui, has said the time is not right to consider more sanctions against Iran.

The UN Security Council, including China, has previously called for Iran to stop enriching uranium and has issued three sets of sanctions.

Iran's leaders insist their atomic programme is only meant for energy-generating purposes.

But the US and its allies fear Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons.

China has the presidency of the UN Security Council during January, and is one of its five permanent veto-holders.

Timing tangle

Mr Zhang told reporters at the UN that "more time and patience" was needed to find a diplomatic solution to the impasse.

The Chinese ambassador's comments come days after after Iran missed an end-of-year deadline set by the US to respond positively to offers of talks about its uranium enrichment programme.

Plans on how to respond are apparently still up in the air, says the BBC's Tom Lane, at the UN in New York.

Diplomats at the UN say senior figures from Europe, the US, Russia and China will meet later this month to exchange opinions, our correspondent says.

US officials have previously called for "crippling" sanctions in the event of a diplomatic failure.

However, recent reports suggest they are currently thinking of "targeted sanctions" that focus on people and companies involved in Iran's nuclear programme, our correspondent adds.

Analysts say it could take Iran from between 18 months and three years to build a nuclear bomb.

With all this in the background, diplomats say it could be many weeks and even months before a deal is reached at the UN, our correspondent reports.

However, it is possible the US and its allies could roll out new sanctions of their own sooner.

22 December 2009

Ahmadinejad denies Iran nuclear bomb trigger tests



Mr Ahmadinejad said criticism of Iran was becoming "a tasteless joke"

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has said a document apparently showing that Tehran plans to test a trigger for a nuclear bomb is a US forgery.

In an interview filmed on Friday with ABC News, Mr Ahmadinejad said the report in the Times newspaper was "fundamentally not true".

Mr Ahmadinejad said criticism of Iran's nuclear programme had become "a repetitive and tasteless joke".

Iran says its nuclear enrichment programme is for peaceful purposes.

The BBC's Jane O'Brien in Washington says the interview offered a rare opportunity to see Iranian leader being questioned by the US media.

But Mr Ahmadinejad's answers gave little indication that his administration is moving towards more conciliatory position, says our correspondent. 'Fabricated papers'

The Times reported last week that it had obtained a document, dating from 2007, describing a four-year plan by Iran to test a nuclear trigger using uranium deuteride.

The product can be used as a neutron initiator: the component of a nuclear bomb that triggers an explosion.

In his first public response to the report, Mr Ahmadinejad said the accusations were "fundamentally not true".

He dismissed the documents, saying: "They are all a fabricated bunch of papers continuously being forged and disseminated by the American government."

When asked if there would "be no nuclear weapon in Iran, ever", Mr Ahmadinejad said his view was already known.

"You should say something only once. We have said once that we don't want a nuclear bomb. We don't accept it."

'Bullying'

Iran is already subject to three sets of UN sanctions for its refusal to suspend its uranium enrichment programme.



Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment plant (image: DigitalGlobe)

It is at risk of further sanctions after it rejected a deal to send low-enriched uranium abroad to be refined into fuel for a research reactor.

Mr Ahmadinejad said Iran would welcome talks "under fair conditions".

"We don't welcome confrontation, but we don't surrender to bullying either," he said.

"If you are saying you are going to impose sanctions, then go and do it."

Mr Ahmadinejad also rejected criticism of Iran's human rights situation and allegations of mass arrests following the elections which returned him to office in June.

"These things have to do with the judiciary. We have good laws. There is the judge. These people have got lawyers. These are not political questions."

He said people in Iran had more freedom than in the US.

The ABC interview took place before the latest protests held at the funeral of the influential dissident cleric, Grand Ayatollah Montazeri.

Iran says its uranium enrichment programme is for purely peaceful purposes, aimed at generating electricity so that it can export more gas and oil. But the US and its allies say it could be used to develop weapons.

16 December 2009

US House passes Iran sanctions bill amid nuclear row



Iran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes

The US House of Representatives has overwhelmingly approved new sanctions against Iran aimed at halting its disputed nuclear programme.

The measure empowers President Barack Obama to ban foreign firms that supply Iran with refined petroleum from doing business in the US.

The bill, which passed 412-12, can only become law if approved by the Senate.

The measure expands an existing US law that punishes any firm that invests \$20m a year in Iran's energy sector.

Iran has one of the world's largest oil reserves but it lacks refining capacity and imports 40% of domestic fuel needs.

It gets most of those imports from European firms such as Vitol, Trafigura, Total and British Petroleum.

Under the proposed new sanctions, firms could be banned from doing business with the US or blocked from receiving financial assistance from American institutions.

'Could backfire'

The BBC's Richard Lister in Washington says the bill is a warning to Iran that Congress is serious about imposing significant sanctions unless the Iranian leadership demonstrates that it is not seeking nuclear weapons.

Critics of the legislation say it could backfire and lead to Iranian citizens blaming the US for any supply shortages.

"This will unify the Iranian people against us," said Republican Representative Ron Paul, who opposed the measure.

But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the measures sent a clear signal to Iran that Washington would use all the tools at its disposal to stop it from achieving a nuclear capability.

"We must use all the tools at our disposal, from diplomacy to sanctions, to stop Iran's march toward nuclear capability," she said.

Iran is already subject to UN sanctions over its nuclear programme, which the West suspects is for military purposes.

Tehran has insisted its nuclear programme is for purely peaceful purposes and has warned that further sanctions will be ineffective.

16 December 2009

Iran test-fires advanced missile



Iran has successfully test fired a improved version of a medium-range missile, state television has said.

The Sajjil-2 has a longer range than previously tested missiles which could travel 2,000 km, Iran's Arabic-language television station announced. That would put Israel and US bases in the Gulf within range.

Correspondents say it is not the first time this missile has been tested, but it is likely to provoke condemnation from the West as a provocative act. UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown said the launch could increase the likelihood of further sanctions on Iran.

"This is a matter of serious concern to the international community and it does make the case for us moving further on sanctions," he said. Imminent arrest?

This latest test comes on the same day that Iran's judiciary announced it had evidence opposition leaders had tried to foment anti-government tension on the streets following disputed elections in June.

The announcement by judiciary chief Sadeq Larijani is seen as an indication opposition leaders may be about to be arrested.

"We have enough proof about the leaders of this plot against the system," Mr Larijani said.

The re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in June sparked mass protests by supporters of reformist candidates Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi.

Hundreds of protesters have been arrested and five have been sentenced to death by courts.

Protests have continued and Iran accuses the reformists of being influenced and aided by the West.

Our correspondent says the missile launch may be an attempt to distract attention from plans to arrest the opposition leaders.

In September Iran was heavily criticised after testing its Sajjil and Shahab missiles.

That test firing came just weeks after Iran revealed the existence of a previously secret nuclear facility in the mountains near the city of Qom.

Iran's finger on nuclear trigger

4:00 AM Tuesday Dec 15, 2009



An Iranian student hides her face during a demonstration at Tehran University. Photo / AP

WASHINGTON - Intelligence documents suggest Iran is working on testing a key final component of a nuclear bomb, the Times reports.

The newspaper says the notes, believed to be from 2007, describe a four-year plan to test a neutron initiator. The component triggers an explosion in a nuclear bomb, it says.

The Times says the document describes the use of a neutron source, uranium deuteride, which experts say has no possible use other than in a nuclear weapon.

"Although Iran might claim that this work is for civil purposes, there is no civil application," David Albright, a physicist and president of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington, told the Times. "This is a strong indicator of weapons work."

Meanwhile, supporters of Iran's opposition have posted hundreds of photos online of men in women's clothing to mock what, they say, was a Government attempt to discredit a student leader by photographing him in a headscarf and woman's robe.

Majid Tavakoli was arrested in last week's large student-led protests after he gave a speech urging students to reject "tyranny", a call greeted by chants of "death to the dictator".

Pro-Government media said he put on women's clothing in an attempt to escape authorities but was caught.

The Fars news agency, which is close to the elite Revolutionary Guard military force, published photos of Tavakoli wearing a black chador, the all-covering dress worn by devout Muslim women, and a blue headscarf around his unshaven, downcast face.

Iran's opposition fired back over the past week by inundating websites, such as Facebook, with pictures of men wearing headscarves and chadors.

Tavakoli's supporters accused authorities of forcing him into women's clothing and photographing him in an attempt to humiliate the activist and discredit the opposition.

Tavakoli is a member of the largest student organisation advocating greater social and political freedoms in Iran.

He is a student at Tehran's Amir Kabir University, the site of one of the December 7 protests that drew tens of thousands out on campuses and city squares around the country.

Yesterday, Iran's Supreme Leader issued a stern warning to the opposition, accusing it of violating the law by insulting the memory of the Islamic Republic's revered founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Declaring opposition rallies were illegal, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made it clear he would not tolerate any more protests by reformers seeking to revive their challenge to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad six months after his disputed re-election.

Tension has increased in Iran since student backers of opposition leader Mir-Hossein Mousavi last week clashed in Tehran with security forces armed with batons and tear gas in the largest anti-Government demonstration in months.

State television has broadcast footage of what it said were opposition supporters tearing up and trampling on a picture of late revolutionary leader Khomeini.

"They are openly violating the law, they insulted Imam Khomeini," Khamenei said in a televised speech.

The opposition earlier accused the authorities of planning to use the reported "desecration" of Khomeini's picture as a pretext for measures to uproot the reform movement.

Some moderate websites suggested Mousavi might be arrested.

- AP, OBSERVER

14 December 2009

Meeting on Iran's nuclear programme cancelled



Iran has said new sanctions will not affect its nuclear programme

A planned meeting of diplomats from world powers on curbing Iran's nuclear programme has been cancelled.

Envoys from the US, UK, France, Russia, China and Germany had been due to meet, reportedly either in Brussels or at the Copenhagen climate conference.

Unnamed US sources told reporters China had had scheduling problems. There will now be a live conference by phone.

A US spokesman said the diplomats looked forward to continuing their consultations on how to deal with Iran.

Correspondents say the news marks a setback for efforts to present a unified front on Iran in the face of continued defiance from Tehran.

The Iranians are under UN Security Council sanctions for refusing to stop enriching uranium.

The US and France said it was time to impose new sanctions last week, after a UN report suggested that Iran was trying to defy some of the existing curbs.

Iran 'ready to swap uranium for fuel'

December 13, 2009 1:43 p.m. EST



Manouchehr Mottaki said Iran will continue to cooperate with the IAEA.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- U.S. and other leading nations negotiating with Iran to send low-enriched uranium abroad
- U.N. nuclear watchdog, has proposed Iran send low-enriched uranium to Russia
- White House warned Iran it faces further sanctions if it does not abandon enrichment activities
- Iranian FM: Tehran has fully cooperated with IAEA and is ready to continue "constructive cooperation"

(CNN) -- Iran is ready to give up some enriched uranium in exchange for fuel that would power a reactor used in cancer research, the country's foreign minister said Sunday, according to Iranian media.

"We have explicitly declared that Iran is ready to exchange some 400 kilograms of 3.5 percent enriched uranium in Iran's Kish Island and receive 20 percent enriched fuel," Manouchehr Mottaki said, according to state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

The report offered no further details on the plan.

The United States and other leading nations have been negotiating with Iran to send low-enriched uranium abroad, where it would be turned into material for use at the reactor.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, has proposed that Iran send low-enriched uranium to Russia and then France for processing.

But a senior State Department official told CNN Iran's proposal does not appear to be consistent with the IAEA draft agreement.

"The terms of that agreement call for Iran to send 1,200 kilograms of its low-enriched uranium to Russia in one batch, where it would be further enriched and then sent to France for fabrication into fuel assemblies," the official said.

"We remain committed to these terms. Unfortunately, Iran has been unwilling to engage in further talks on its nuclear program.

"The draft agreement reflects an extensive effort by the IAEA, Russia, France and the United States to respond positively to Iran's request for fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor, which produces medical isotopes," the official said.

"It also offers an opportunity for Iran to begin to build confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear program. We urge Iran not to squander this opportunity."

The deal could reduce the amount of material Iran has to make a nuclear bomb. America and some of its allies fear Iran's goal is to produce a nuclear bomb, but Tehran has insisted its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes.

Mottaki, attending the Manama Security Meeting in Bahrain, said Iran has fully cooperated with the IAEA and is ready to continue its "constructive cooperation" with the so-called "P5+1" -- the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany, according to IRIB.

Nuclear weapons have no place in Iran's defensive doctrine, he said, and Tehran believes the era where nuclear weapons were effective leverage has come to an end, IRIB reported.

Last month, the IAEA board passed a resolution demanding that Iran stop construction on a once-secret nuclear enrichment facility near the Iranian city of Qom.

Thirty-five countries, including Russia and China, backed the measure, which also demanded that Iran stop uranium enrichment, which can be used for producing fuel for a nuclear weapon. Russia and China previously had resisted the push for imposing stronger sanctions on Iran.

In the wake of that resolution, Iran announced its Cabinet had authorized the construction of 10 new nuclear production facilities.

The White House warned Iran earlier this month it faces further sanctions if it does not abandon its enrichment activities and "forsake their nuclear weapons program," spokesman Robert Gibbs said.

The outgoing head of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, told CNN's Christiane Amanpour last month that timing is the top issue delaying a nuclear deal between Iran and the international powers.

Rather than sign on to the draft agreement outlining the swap plan, he said, Iran wants to ship out low-enriched uranium and simultaneously get back more enriched material, which would enable it to receive the fuel more quickly, ElBaradei said.

In his final report to the IAEA's governing board, ElBaradei said the agency had been able to verify that no known stocks of nuclear fuel had been diverted from authorized uses in Iran. But, he said, inspectors "have effectively reached a dead end" without further cooperation from Tehran.

On Sunday, Iran's parliament speaker, Ali Larijani, said in an address to lawmakers that ever since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has been targeted by enemies of Islam, including the United States and its allies.

"Mr. Obama's cheap remarks about IRI's (Islamic Republic of Iran's) internal affairs, as well as U.S. minister of state's statements accusing Iran of supporting terrorism all reveal their worries about IRI's increasing influence in the region," Larijani said.

On the nuclear issue, he said the United States and others don't want Iran to continue its nuclear activities under the framework of the IAEA.

US rejects Iran nuclear offer



Iran's foreign minister proposed a swap of 880 pounds of low-enriched uranium for nuclear fuel [AFP]

The US has dismissed an Iranian offer to exchange nuclear fuel, saying it was inconsistent with a deal that would allow Iran to avoid further sanctions.

"Iran's proposal does not appear to be consistent with the fair and balanced draft agreement proposed by the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], the UN nuclear watchdog, a US official said on Saturday.

Manouchehr Mottaki, Iran's foreign minister, proposed that the country swap 880 pounds (400 kilogrammes) of low-enriched uranium for nuclear fuel in an exchange on Iran's island of Kish, in the Persian Gulf, as the first phase of a deal with world powers.

Deal breaker

However, according to the deal, in consultation with the US, Russia and France, the nuclear material was to be exchanged all at once as the IAEA believes that carrying it out in slow stages would leave Iran in control of enough uranium to make a bomb.

The IAEA had also previously ruled out a swap taking place inside Iran.

The US official, who declined to be named, said Iran's offer contained "nothing new" and urged the country to take up the existing IAEA proposal, which calls on Iran to send 2,645 pounds (1,200 kilogrammes) of its low enriched uranium to Russia "in one batch."

Under the plan Iran's uranium would be enriched to higher levels in Russia, turned into fuel rods in France and returned to power a research reactor in Tehran that produces medical isotopes.

The material in the fuel rods cannot be enriched to higher levels, denying Iran the ability to use it to make weapons.

Nuclear concerns

"We remain committed to these terms," the official said. "Unfortunately, Iran has been unwilling to engage in further talks on its nuclear programme.

"We urge Iran not to squander this opportunity."

In another change to the plan, Iran wants to receive the fuel rods immediately in simultaneous exchanges for its uranium because it says it is worried that France or Russia could renege on the deal.

Iran's stockpile of uranium is at the heart of international concerns because it offers Iran a possible pathway to nuclear weapons production if it is enriched to higher levels.

Tehran insists it only wants to use the material to produce fuel for power plants and for other peaceful purposes.

Last month, the 35-nation board of the IAEA endorsed a resolution from the six powers, the US, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany, criticising Iran for defying a UN security council ban on uranium enrichment and continuing to expand its operations.

It also censured Iran for secretly building a second enrichment facility and demanded that it immediately suspend further construction on it.

11 December 2009

Iran faces 'significant new sanctions', US warns



Iran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes

Iran faces "significant" new sanctions over its nuclear programme, according to US Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

And he reiterated that all options - including possible military action - should stay on the table.

Mr Gates was speaking to US troops during a visit to northern Iraq.

His comments come a day after the US, Britain and France warned that Iran faced tougher sanctions unless it immediately complied with UN Security Council resolutions.

Mr Gates said: "I think that you are going to see some significant additional sanctions imposed by the international community, assuming the Iranians don't change course."

Uranium enrichment

But despite warning that possible military action should stay on the table, he said it would "only buy some time, maybe two or three years".

Iran is already subject to UN sanctions over its nuclear programme, which the West suspects is for military purposes.

Any move towards a new round of sanctions is expected to involve long and arduous negotiations with reluctant Security Council members, such as China, says the BBC's Barbara Plett at the UN.

There is also the question about whether or not agreement could be won on significantly tougher restrictions, she adds. Iran has insisted its nuclear programme is for purely peaceful purposes and has warned that further sanctions will be ineffective. It has not signed up to a six-nation compromise plan over its controversial uranium enrichment programme. Russia, China, the US, UK, France and Germany have suggested uranium enrichment for civilian nuclear energy could be regulated if Iran handed over its uranium to Russia to manage the process.
10 December 2009

UN 'close to new sanctions on Iran', France says



Iran has said new sanctions will not affect its nuclear programme. The UN no longer has any reason to wait to consider new sanctions on Iran if it does not respond to concerns over its nuclear programme, France says. If Iran continued to ignore demands, "we must draw all of the necessary conclusions," and move to sanctions, French Ambassador Gerard Araud said. Iran is already subject to UN sanctions over its nuclear programme, which the West suspects is for military purposes. Mr Araud spoke after a report said Iran was trying to defy some of the curbs. The head of the UN panel which monitors a 2007 ban on Iranian arms exports told the Security Council there was "an apparent pattern of sanctions violations" by Iran over the past three months. Iran has insisted its nuclear programme is for purely peaceful purposes and has warned that further sanctions will be ineffective. It recently rejected a six-nation compromise plan over its controversial uranium enrichment programme. Russia, China, the US, UK, France and Germany suggested uranium enrichment for civilian nuclear energy could be regulated if Iran handed over its uranium to Russia to manage the process. But Iran rejected the deal, saying it would only agree to a simultaneous swap of fuel within its own borders.

4 December 2009

Iran to give just six months' notice on nuclear sites



Iran has said it will tell investigators where their planned plants are. Iran will inform UN nuclear inspectors where 10 planned installations are only six months before they become operational, Tehran has said. Friday's announcement came after the US warned Iran that "time was running out" if it wanted to avoid sanctions over its nuclear programme. International inspectors have demanded information on all planned facilities. It maintains that its programme is peaceful, despite international fears it is trying to build nuclear weapons. Iran argues that under international agreements it is only required to give 180 days' notice before it begins operating a new facility. But the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, says that Iran must abide by a subsidiary agreement it signed in 2003 and give information on plants still at the design stage. Tehran has continued to defy the six nations - the US, UK, France, Germany, China and Russia - trying to negotiate a deal over their nuclear material. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced last week that his country would build another 10 secret facilities to enrich uranium, although experts doubt whether it has the resources to do so. He has also said Iran plans to enrich uranium to 20%, a higher level than at present. On Friday Iranian officials said they would allow nuclear inspectors in to the plants six months before they started up centrifuges used to enrich uranium. Control Iran has also rejected a deal suggested by negotiators to allay international fears that it is attempting to enrich uranium to the degree necessary to make a nuclear weapon. The deal would have regulated Iran's access to its nuclear material by sending it abroad to be enriched. Under the plan, the return of the enriched uranium would be controlled and its use limited to use in a reactor near Tehran which is monitored by the International Atomic Energy Authority. Last week, the IAEA voted to rebuke Iran for building a second facility in secret under a mountain near the city of Qom. On Thursday Iran's Parliament responded saying it would review relations with countries that had backed the condemnation of the Tehran government at the IAEA. Russia, previously considered an ally of Iran, had joined the vote. But on Thursday Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin apparently eased its pressure on Iran, declining to answer a question on possible sanctions at a televised question-and-answer session. Russia had "no information that Iran is working on the creation of a nuclear weapon" Mr Putin said. Civilian nuclear power requires uranium enriched to about 3%, but weapons grade uranium needs to be enriched to 90%. Iran has declared its intention to enrich uranium to 20%.

Existing UN sanctions are meant to prevent the flow of any items or technology which might aid Iran in enriching uranium or developing nuclear weapon delivery systems.

But further sanctions might be imposed if diplomacy fails, negotiators say.

"Time is running out. That deadline is the end of the year," White House spokesman Robert Gibbs told journalists on Wednesday.

2 December 2009

Ahmadinejad: Iran will enrich uranium to higher levels



Iran has increased the international tension surrounding negotiations

Iran will stick to its plans to enrich its own uranium to a higher degree than at present, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced on Wednesday.

He said Iran would enrich uranium to 20%, despite international attempts to reach a deal to stop it, amid fears Iran is trying to build a nuclear bomb. Negotiations have soured and Iran says it will build 10 new enrichment plants.

Civilian nuclear power requires uranium enriched to about 3%, but weapons grade uranium needs to be enriched to 90%.

Iran says its nuclear programme is entirely for civilian purposes.

Deal rejected

The nations trying to negotiate a deal with Iran suggested uranium enrichment for civilian nuclear energy could be regulated if Iran handed over its uranium Russia to manage the process.



The Zionist regime [Israel] and its backer [the US] cannot do a damn thing to stop Iran's nuclear work

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

Iranian President

But Iran has rejected the deal saying it would only agree to a simultaneous swap of fuel within its own borders.

In his address to a crowd in the southern city of Isfahan on Wednesday, President Ahmadinejad said that the countries it is negotiating with had imposed too many conditions.

He condemned as "illegal" a resolution passed last week by the International Atomic Energy Agency condemning its development of a uranium enrichment site in secret.

In what it said was a response to the censure, Iran announced on Sunday that it would build another 10 uranium enrichment sites, although experts say it is thought unlikely to have the resources to do so.

On Wednesday Mr Ahmadinejad said Israel could not "do a damn thing to stop Iran's nuclear work".

The US and Israel have refused to rule out military action if diplomacy fails.

'Mistake'

Russia, previously considered an ally of Iran, joined the vote at the UN International Atomic Energy Agency that condemned Iran for the cover-up of a second nuclear facility in the mountains near Qom.

In return President Ahmadinejad on Tuesday criticised Russia, saying it had "made a mistake" in condemning Tehran.

The BBC's Tehran correspondent Jon Leyne says the Iranians want to supply a research reactor with highly enriched Uranium following the breakdown of the international deal to provide fuel for it.

But some Western analysts say Iran does not possess the technical know-how to make fuel rods for the reactor, our correspondent says.

Six nations - the US, UK, France, Germany, China and Russia - have been involved in co-ordinating the UN Security Council's position on Iran.

Existing UN sanctions are meant to prevent the flow of any items or technology which might aid Iran in enriching uranium or developing nuclear weapon delivery systems.

The sanctions range from actual sales or supplies to dealings with named individuals.

1 December 2009

Ahmadinejad says UN sanctions on Iran will not work



Mr Ahmadinejad said isolating Iran was "impossible"

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has said international sanctions against his country will not work.

In a TV interview, Mr Ahmadinejad also said that Russia had "made a mistake" in voting last week to condemn Tehran for building a second enrichment plant.

He added that Iran was not obliged to inform UN nuclear watchdog the IAEA of plans to build more nuclear sites.

On Monday Western nations warned Iran against its plans to build 10 more uranium enrichment sites.

Western powers say Tehran is trying to develop nuclear arms, while Iran says its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful civilian purposes.

'Psychological warfare'

Mr Ahmadinejad said warnings by Western powers that Iran would be isolated were "ridiculous".

"They need us more than we need them. It is psychological warfare and isolating Iran is impossible," he said.

“ Any finger which is about to pull the trigger will be cut off

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

More sanctions after new defiance?

Q&A: Iran and the nuclear issue

"Any finger which is about to pull the trigger will be cut off."

He said Iran could produce its own petrol within a week if fuel imports were cut off.

He said that Russia was wrong to join Western countries in voting in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on a resolution against Iran over its cover-up of the new uranium enrichment plant near Qom.

"Russia made a mistake. It does not have an accurate analysis of today's world situation," he said.

However, in response to Iran's announcement that it would expand its nuclear programme, a senior Russian diplomatic source said Moscow would join an international consensus on sanctions.

'No bluff'

Mr Ahmadinejad's speech came just a day after Iran was warned not to defy international demands by building 10 more uranium enrichment sites. America's envoy to the UN, Susan Rice, called Iran's announcement "unacceptable", while French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said Iran was playing "an extremely dangerous game".

But the Iranian president said the plan was not a bluff.

"We will follow through on what we say," he said.

The head of Iran's nuclear programme, Ali Akbar Salehi, said on Sunday that Tehran had been provoked into building the new facilities by the vote condemning the Qom site.

Six nations - the US, UK, France, Germany, China and Russia - have been involved in co-ordinating the UN Security Council's position on Iran. Existing UN sanctions are meant to prevent the flow of any items or technology which might aid Iran in enriching uranium or developing nuclear weapon delivery systems.

The sanctions range from actual sales or supplies to dealings with named individuals.

Iranian legal threat over nuclear plans

December 1, 2009 -- Updated 0852 GMT (1652 HKT)



Iran has unveiled plans to develop more uranium enrichment plants similar to the one in Natanz.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Iran pledges legal action over alleged infringements of its nuclear "rights"
- U.N. watchdog has demanded Iran stop construction on new nuclear plant
- Iran announced plans Sunday to build 10 new nuclear production facilities
- Iran says it needs to develop nuclear fuel to meet long-term energy needs

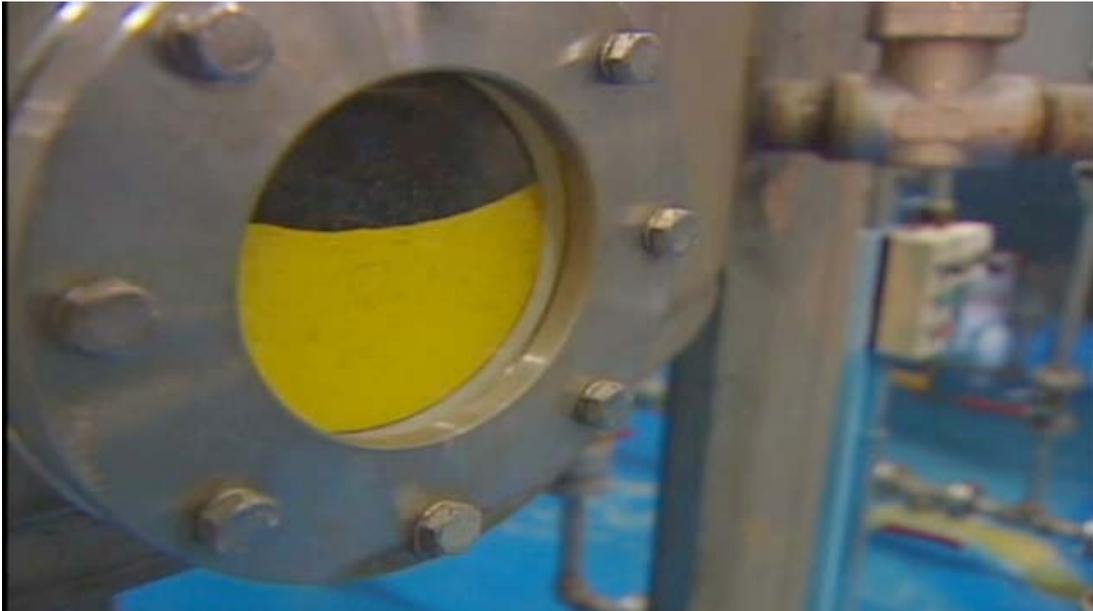
(CNN) -- Iran will take legal action over infringements on its rights to develop nuclear power, the country's foreign minister said Tuesday, a day after the country announced plans to build 10 new nuclear plants.

"We will not do away with our rights," Foreign Minister Ramin Mohnmanparas said at a news conference, without clarifying what legal action meant.

He did say that Iran would write letters of protest to nations that backed a U.N. resolution of rebuke over Iran's nuclear program.

Mohnmanparas accused such countries of politicizing nuclear fuel as a way to meddle in his country's domestic affairs.

"We will elaborate on why their decisions were incorrect, and how to correct and what the consequences might be," he said of the letters.



Video: Iran

to expand nuclear program



Video:

Report: Iran OKs new enrichment plants

RELATED TOPICS

- Iran
- Nuclear Proliferation
- International Atomic Energy Agency

The U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, on Friday passed a resolution demanding that Iran stop construction on a once-secret nuclear enrichment facility in the Iranian holy city of Qom. Twenty-five countries backed the measure, which also demanded that Iran stop uranium enrichment, which can be used for producing fuel for a nuclear device.

In the resolution's wake, Iran's state news agency reported Sunday that the nation's Cabinet had authorized the construction of 10 new nuclear production facilities.

At Tuesday's news conference in the Iranian capital, Tehran, Mohnmanparas said his country needs nuclear fuel from the plants to meet its long-term energy needs, to move toward self-sufficiency.

"The plans we have, we will push our plans ahead," the foreign minister said. "We will adhere to IAEA framework and under their supervision. "We remain committed to the NPT," he added, referring to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, which bars member states from pursuing nuclear weapons and requires international inspectors to have access to nuclear facilities. The treaty gives Iran the right to produce nuclear fuel, Iran says. Tehran says the plants authorized Sunday would produce enough enriched uranium to yield about 20,000 megawatts of electricity a year. Iran currently has one nuclear power plant, which has yet to begin full operation.

By comparison, 65 nuclear power plants in the United States produced about 800,000 megawatts of power in 2007, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

In his final report to the IAEA's governing board, outgoing Director-General Mohammed ElBaradei said Thursday that the agency has been able to verify that no known stocks of nuclear fuel have been diverted from authorized uses. But he said inspectors "have effectively reached a dead end" without further Iranian cooperation.

Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said Monday that, in the United States' view, "as Iran makes choices that seem to indicate

that it is not at this stage ready and willing to take up the offers on the engagement track, then we will put greater emphasis on the pressure track." The "pressure track" is often code language for the pursuit of further U.N. Security Council sanctions.
30 November 2009

Germany warns Iran it faces new UN nuclear sanctions



Iran argues that its economy will need nuclear power eventually
Germany has warned Iran it faces new UN sanctions after Tehran announced plans for 10 uranium enrichment sites in defiance of international demands.

Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, whose country is involved in talks on the dispute, said Iran must know the world's patience was "not endless".

Iran, he said, must fulfil its international commitments.

Western powers say Tehran is trying to develop nuclear arms while Iran says it needs nuclear energy for its economy.

The head of Iran's nuclear programme, Ali Akbar Salehi, accused the West of provoking his country into launching the plan to build 10 new plants.



It is clear that if Iran rejects the outstretched hand of the international community, it must expect further sanctions

Guido Westerwelle
German foreign minister

Q&A: Iran and the nuclear issue

Iran - new sanctions on the way?

Iran's key nuclear sites

However, Iran's parliamentary speaker, Ali Larijani, said he believed that a diplomatic solution was still possible.

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner accused Iran of "playing an extremely dangerous game" and a source in Russia's foreign ministry was quoted as saying Moscow was "seriously concerned by the latest statements of the Iranian leadership".

Asked by the BBC if military action by Israel against Iran was now more likely, Israel's ambassador to the UK, Ron Prosor, called for "all options to be on the table" without being more specific.

'Without ifs and buts'

"Iran's announcement of the expansion of its uranium enrichment clearly goes in the wrong direction," Mr Westerwelle said in a statement in Berlin.

"Iran must know that the international community's patience is not endless.

"Iran is urged to co-operate with the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] without ifs and buts and to fulfil its international commitments.

"It is clear that if Iran rejects the outstretched hand of the international community, it must expect further sanctions."

Germany has - along with the US, UK, France, China and Russia - been involved in co-ordinating the UN Security Council's position on Iran.

Existing UN sanctions are meant to prevent the flow of any items or technology which might aid Iran in enriching uranium or developing nuclear weapon delivery systems.

The sanctions range from actual sales or supplies to dealings with named individuals.

'We had no intention'

Iran's proposed new plants would be of a similar size to its main existing enrichment plant at Natanz.



Iran is set on processing its own uranium

Mr Salehi, who is also a vice-president, said: "We had no intention of building many facilities like the Natanz site but apparently the West doesn't want to understand Iran's peaceful message."

He accused foreign powers of pushing the UN's nuclear watchdog to rebuke Iran for covering up another uranium enrichment plant near the town of Qom.

"The action by 5+1 [the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany] at the IAEA prompted the [Iranian] government to approve a proposal to build 10 sites like that of Natanz," Mr Salehi said.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told his cabinet at the weekend that parliament had ordered that Iran should produce 20,000 megawatts of nuclear energy by 2020.

It therefore needed to make 250-300 tonnes of nuclear fuel a year, he said, which would require 500,000 centrifuges for enriching uranium.

Natanz has nearly 5,000 working centrifuges, with existing plans to build 54,000 in all.

Mr Larijani told reporters in Tehran that it was in foreign powers' interests to find a diplomatic solution. "I still think there is a diplomatic opportunity and it is beneficial to them [world powers] to use this, so that Iran continues its work under the framework of the agency [the IAEA] and international supervision," he said.
30 November 2009

Iran accuses West of provoking new nuclear sites move



Iran says it needs new plants to supply its future nuclear power stations

A top Iranian official has accused the West of provoking his country into launching a plan to build 10 new uranium enrichment plants.

Vice-President Ali Akbar Salehi said a UN demand for Iran to halt work on a recently revealed site had "prompted the government to approve the plan".

"Apparently the West doesn't want to understand Iran's peaceful message," he told Iranian state radio.

Tehran's move has fuelled further concerns over its nuclear programme.

A source in Russia's foreign ministry told local news agencies on Monday that Russia, which supplies much of Iran's nuclear technology, was "seriously concerned by the latest statements of the Iranian leadership".

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told a French radio programme that Iran was being "a bit childish".

"Iran is playing an extremely dangerous game," he said.

"There's no coherence in all this, other than a gut reaction."

29 November 2009

Iran 'planning 10 new uranium enrichment sites'



Iran's second uranium enrichment facility came to light in September

Iran's government has approved plans to build 10 new uranium enrichment plants, according to state media.

The government told the Iranian nuclear agency to begin work on five sites, with five more to be located over the next two months.

It comes days after the UN nuclear watchdog rebuked Iran for covering up a uranium enrichment plant.

The White House said the move was "yet another serious violation of Iran's clear obligations".

Meanwhile, Britain described the news as "a matter of serious concern" and potentially a "deliberate breach" of UN resolutions.

Western powers say Iran is trying to develop nuclear arms. Iran says its nuclear programme is peaceful.

ANALYSIS



Jon Leyne, BBC Tehran correspondent

Iran says the purpose is to produce peaceful nuclear power. But the country's first nuclear power station at Bushehr is still under construction and others remain on the drawing board. Under this plan, Iran would increase its production of enriched uranium from just under one metric tonne last year, to up to 300 metric tonnes a year. It's hard to see how this quantity of enriched uranium would be needed any time soon, especially as the fuel for the Bushehr reactor is supplied by Russia.

President Ahmadinejad is also calling for his cabinet to approve a move to increase the enrichment to 20%, up from 5%. The aim, presumably, would be to supply the Tehran research reactor, following the breakdown of an international deal to provide fuel for it. But some Western analysts say Iran does not possess the technical know-how to fabricate fuel rods for the reactor.

The country insists it is only doing what is allowed under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

But a UK Foreign Office spokesman said: "Reports that Iran is considering building more enrichment facilities are clearly a matter of serious concern."

"It would be a deliberate breach of five UN security council resolutions. We will need to consider our response."

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said in a statement: "If true, this would be yet another serious violation of Iran's clear obligations under multiple UN Security Council resolutions and another example of Iran choosing to isolate itself."

"Time is running out for Iran to address the international community's growing concerns about its nuclear programme."

'Hard line'

BBC Tehran correspondent Jon Leyne says Iran's move is a massive act of defiance that is likely to bring forward a direct confrontation over Iran's nuclear programme.

The West will fear this move will speed up Iran's ability to make a nuclear bomb, our correspondent adds.

President Ahmadinejad's immediate purpose may be to up the stakes in the diplomatic standoff, and use the issue to try to consolidate his position at home.

By taking such a hard line, the president could outmanoeuvre critics trying to use the nuclear issue against him, our correspondent adds. Iran says the new plants would be of a similar size to its main existing one at Natanz. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told his cabinet that parliament had ordered that Iran should produce 20,000 megawatts of nuclear energy by 2020.

It therefore needed to make 250-300 tonnes of nuclear fuel a year, he said, which would require 500,000 centrifuges for enriching uranium. Natanz has nearly 5,000 working centrifuges, with plans to build 54,000 in all.

Under the plan Mr Ahmadinejad presented to the cabinet, the level of enrichment would also be increased.

On Friday, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) passed a resolution that was heavily critical of Iran for covering up a uranium enrichment plant near the town of Qom.

Earlier on Sunday it was reported that the Iranian parliament had urged President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government to reduce co-operation with the IAEA.

29 November 2009

Iran MPs urge reduced ties with UN nuclear watchdog



The Qom development is Iran's second uranium enrichment facility

The Iranian parliament has urged President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government to reduce co-operation with the UN nuclear watchdog. The move comes two days after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) rebuked Iran for covering up a uranium enrichment plant. The existence of the plant, near the town of Qom, emerged in September.

Iran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful energy purposes, but the US says it is seeking nuclear weapons.

The disclosure deepened Western fears about the country's nuclear ambitions.

The IAEA resolution rebuking Iran was passed with rare Russian and Chinese backing. Only Cuba, Venezuela and Malaysia voted against it.



The Iranian nation doubtlessly knows that legally its nuclear file has no flaws

Iranian MPs' statement

Parliament speaker Ali Larijani said the resolution showed the US and other powers were engaged "outdated games" and searching for a "chance for haggling".

Mr Larijani, who was previously Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, said: "Do not make the parliament and the Iranian nation choose another path and seriously decrease co-operation with the IAEA."

Iranian state television said 226 lawmakers out of the 290 in the parliament had signed a letter instructing the government to draw up "a quick plan to reduce the level of co-operation with the IAEA and submit it".

'Double standards'

In a statement, the lawmakers attacked the IAEA resolution, saying it was "politicised and lacked consensus".

They also demanded that Iran's nuclear work be continued "without any halt".

"We consider the behaviour of the IAEA to be that of double standards and political. We want it to give up this double standard which has tarnished its reputation," the MPs said.

"Iranian MPs know for sure that the political will of some big powers like the United States and Britain are behind this resolution."

U.N. watchdog urges suspension of Iran nuclear facility

November 27, 2009 -- Updated 2012 GMT (0412 HKT)



Mohamed ElBaradei has criticized Iran's over its failure to provide information about its nuclear program.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Board of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog agency criticized Iran's activities in resolution
- Mohamed ElBaradei : IAEA hit "a dead end" in verifying information about Iran's nuclear program
- ElBaradei's criticism is a departure from a softer tone he has adhered to in the past
- Iran bound by terms of a 2003 agreement under which it must provide information to IAEA

(CNN) -- The board of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog agency Friday sharply criticized Iran's nuclear activities in a resolution, and urged Iran to immediately suspend construction of its recently disclosed nuclear facility at Qom.

Twenty-five of the 35 member countries of the International Atomic Energy Agency board voted for the resolution, with Russia and China joining the United States, Britain, France, and Germany -- a reflection of the international community's concerns that Iran is intent on pursuing nuclear weaponry. Cuba, Malaysia and Venezuela cast the only three votes against the resolution.

"The resolution passed today by the IAEA Board of Governors sends the strongest possible signal to Iran that its actions and intentions remain a matter of grave international concern," said British Foreign Secretary David Miliband.

The White House said the "overwhelming vote" underscores "the resolve and unity of the international community with regard to Iran's nuclear program" and senior administration officials said the United States had warned Iran Friday that it is prepared to push for significantly stronger economic sanctions in wake of the resolution.



Video:

U.N. watchdog censures Iran

RELATED TOPICS

- International Atomic Energy Agency
- Iran
- Mohamed ElBaradei

Iran has long denied claims that it wants to build nuclear weapons. Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast slammed the resolution, saying calling it a "formal, showy and purposeful gesture, aimed at exerting pressure on the Islamic Republic. Such behaviors are vain."

The resolution notes "with serious concern" that "Iran continues to defy the requirements and obligations" in IAEA and U.N. Security Council resolutions and that Iran built an "enrichment facility at Qom in breach of its obligations to suspend all enrichment related activities."

It said Iran's "failure to inform the agency" that it was building a new facility "does not contribute to the building of confidence."

"Iran's declaration of the new facility reduces the level of confidence in the absence of other nuclear facilities and gives rise to questions about whether there are any other nuclear facilities under construction in Iran which have not been declared to the Agency," the resolution said.

The board emphasized that unless Iran cooperates with the IAEA and abides by Security Council resolutions, the agency "will not be in a position to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran."

Also the resolution notes that Iran needs to supply more information and more cooperation so the IAEA can "exclude the possibility of military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programme."

The resolution calls for Iran "to engage with the Agency on the resolution of all outstanding issues concerning Iran's nuclear programme and, to this end, to cooperate fully with the IAEA by providing such access and information that the Agency requests to resolve these issues."

That includes "requested clarifications" about the purpose of the Qom enrichment plant and "the chronology of its design and construction."

It also urges Iran to confirm that it "has not taken a decision to construct, or authorize construction" of other nuclear facilities not disclosed to the IAEA.

The votes for the resolution included Germany and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, countries that have engaged in diplomacy over Iran's nuclear program. That's significant because the votes included those from Russia and China -- which have not always sided with the efforts by the United States, Britain, and France.

There were also six abstentions and one absence.

In his statement, Miliband noted that the resolution clearly states that unless Iran complies with its obligations to the IAEA and the U.N. Security Council, "it remains impossible for the international community to have any confidence in Iranian intentions."

Miliband said Britain and other nations "have made it very clear that our hand is stretched out to Iran. We are waiting for Iran to respond meaningfully. But if it is clear that Iran has chosen not to do so, we will have no alternative but to consider further pressure on Iran ..."

As for the United States, senior administration officials authorized to speak with reporters on the condition their names not be used said, "We are committed to putting together a package of consequences if we don't find a willing partner. We hope Iran takes note of that clear message."

The White House said the resolution also "underscores a commitment to strengthen the rules of the international system, and to support the ability of the IAEA and U.N. Security Council to enforce the rules of the road, and to hold Iran accountable to those rules."

"Indeed, the fact that 25 countries from all parts of the world cast their votes in favor shows the urgent need for Iran to address the growing international deficit of confidence in its intentions," it said.

The resolution was adopted during the IAEA board of governors meeting and coincides with the stepping down of Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei -- who issued sharp words about Iran in his final report to the agency in Vienna, Austria.

It commends ElBaradei "for his professional and impartial efforts" in working "to resolve safeguards issues in Iran." And, it commends him for pursuing an agreement with the IAEA, France and Russia for assistance in pursuing nuclear fuel for Tehran's research reactor.

Earlier this month, Iran retreated from the research reactor deal -- designed to allay fears that the Islamic republic is developing nuclear weapons.

That deal would have required Iran to send its partly enriched uranium abroad to be turned into material for civilian uses such as electricity and medical research.

ElBaradei said the IAEA has hit "a dead end" in verifying information about Iran's nuclear program and that "there has been no movement on remaining issues of concern which need to be clarified for the agency to verify the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program."

In September, Iran shocked the world with the revelation of a nuclear facility at Qom that it had been building secretly. Since then, it has allowed IAEA inspectors to visit the plant.

Iran remains bound by the terms of a 2003 agreement under which it must provide information to the IAEA regarding nuclear facilities as soon as

the decision to build is made or construction is authorized.

"Iran's late declaration of the new facility reduces confidence in the absence of other nuclear facilities under construction in Iran which have not been declared to the agency," ElBaradei said Thursday in Vienna, opening a meeting of the IAEA's 35-member board of governors.

U.S. President Barack Obama has warned Iran that there will be "consequences" if it does not accept the plan.

26 November 2009

Iran warned over nuclear 'dead end' by UN's El Baradei



Mr ElBaradei said no progress had been made in talks with Iran

Investigations into Iran's nuclear programme will reach a "dead end" unless Tehran starts to co-operate, the UN nuclear chief has warned.

Mohamed El Baradei told governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that there had been no movement on issues that needed to be clarified.

He said he was "disappointed" with Iran's rejection of a deal that would see its uranium processed overseas.

He spoke ahead of an IAEA vote on a resolution critical of Iran.

In September Iran was revealed to have a second uranium enrichment facility, deepening Western fears about the nature of its nuclear ambitions.

Iran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful energy purposes, but the US and other nations say its is seeking nuclear weapons.

'Outstanding issues'

Addressing IAEA governors in Vienna, Mr El Baradei said his inspectors had made no progress on areas which needed to be clarified in order to verify the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

"It is now well over a year since the agency was last able to engage Iran in discussions about these outstanding issues," he said.

"We have effectively reached a dead end, unless Iran engages fully with us."

Tehran's late declaration of a second nuclear fuel enrichment facility had, he said, reduced "confidence in the absence of other nuclear facilities under construction in Iran which have not been declared".

And he called Iran's failure to agree to a US-backed plan under which its low-enriched uranium would be shipped overseas for processing into fuel disappointing.

The plan is seen as a way for Iran to get the fuel it needs, while giving guarantees to the West that it will not be used for nuclear weapons.

The BBC's John Leyne says that after years of taking a conciliatory tone, Mr El Baradei appears to have lost patience with the Iranians.

The IAEA chief, who steps down next month, spoke ahead of the vote on a resolution calling on Iran to halt construction of the recently-declared enrichment plant.

According to Reuters news agency, it also calls on Iran to comply with Security Council resolutions demanding a halt to uranium enrichment activity and allow IAEA inspectors access to its facilities.

If approved, it would be the first IAEA action against Iran in almost four years. The vote is expected either later in the day or on Friday.

Departing nuclear watchdog chief: Iran talks at 'dead end'

November 27, 2009 -- Updated 0841 GMT (1641 HKT)



Mohamed ElBaradei has criticized Iran's over its failure to provide information about its nuclear program.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Mohamed ElBaradei : IAEA hit "a dead end" in verifying information about Iran's nuclear program
- ElBaradei's criticism is a departure from a softer tone he has adhered to in the past
- Iran bound by terms of a 2003 agreement under which it must provide information to IAEA

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(CNN) -- After a dozen years at the helm of the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency, Mohamed ElBaradei is stepping down this weekend with sharp parting words for Iran.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has hit "a dead end" in verifying information about Iran's nuclear program, ElBaradei said in his final report to the agency in Vienna, Austria.

"There has been no movement on remaining issues of concern which need to be clarified for the agency to verify the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program," he said.

"It is now well over a year since the agency was last able to engage Iran in discussions about these outstanding issues," he added. "We have effectively reached a dead end, unless Iran engages fully with us."

ElBaradei's criticism is a departure from a softer tone he has adhered to in the past, much to the dismay of Washington.

His comments come as the world's most powerful nations are trying to map a way forward on Tehran's controversial nuclear program.

In September, Iran shocked the world with the revelation of a nuclear facility that it had been building secretly. Since then, it has allowed IAEA inspectors to visit the plant.

Iran remains bound by the terms of a 2003 agreement under which it must provide information to the IAEA regarding nuclear facilities as soon as the decision to build is made or construction is authorized.

"Iran's late declaration of the new facility reduces confidence in the absence of other nuclear facilities under construction in Iran which have not been declared to the agency," ElBaradei said Thursday in Vienna, opening a meeting of the IAEA's 35-member board of governors.

Earlier this month, Iran retreated from a deal designed to allay fears that the Islamic republic is developing nuclear weapons. That deal required Iran to send its partly enriched uranium abroad to be turned into material for civilian uses such as electricity and medical research.

U.S. President Barack Obama has warned Iran that there will be "consequences" if it does not accept the plan.

ElBaradei's report could prompt reassessment of the matter and influence Washington's decision on whether to impose harsh sanctions.