

10 January 2014 Last updated at 18:42 GMT

'Very good progress' at Iran nuclear talks - EU



As part of the deal, inspectors from the UN's nuclear agency visited Iran's Arak heavy water production plant last month

The EU has reported "very good progress" at talks with Iran on the implementation of a deal on Iran's nuclear programme.

The issue was now "under validation at political level in capitals", the EU's [External Action Service](#) said.

Earlier Iran's deputy foreign minister was quoted as telling state media all outstanding issues had been resolved.

In November Iran agreed a deal to freeze its nuclear programme in return for sanctions being eased.

In recent weeks Iranian negotiators have been meeting with representatives of the "P5+1" group (US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany) to discuss how technical details of the deal would be implemented.

"We found solutions for all the points of disagreement," Iran's deputy Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister earlier told state television, according to AFP.

However, Mr Araqchi also said implementation of the agreement depended "on the final ratification of the capitals".

He added that no further meetings at expert level were planned for the moment.

For its part the US state department also said "good progress" had been made.

"There have been a few outstanding issues, but at this point, the reports that everything has been finalised are incorrect," state department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said, according to

Reuters.

Rouhani in Davos

Western nations have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire a nuclear weapon, but Iran says the programme is for solely peaceful ends.

As part of the deal, inspectors from the UN's nuclear agency visited Iran's Arak heavy water production plant on 8 December for the first time in more than two years.

Israeli and American critics of the Geneva deal say it gives Iran cover to expand the programme.

Last month US Secretary of State John Kerry defended the deal before a panel in Congress and resisted calls to introduce additional sanctions.

Also on Friday it was announced that Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is due attend the annual World Economic Forum in Davos later this month.

He will be only the second Iranian president since 1979 to attend the event, after reformist President Mohammed Khatami in 2004.

Mr Rouhani's more conciliatory style has been cited as a factor in the recent improvement in relations between Iran and the West.

23 December 2013 Last updated at 00:30 GMT

Iran nuclear talks with world powers make 'slow progress'



Ms Bonino was making a rare visit to Iran for talks with Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif

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Iran's foreign minister says talks with world powers on the implementation of an accord on the country's nuclear programme are making "slow progress".

Mohammad Javad Zarif was speaking alongside his Italian counterpart Emma Bonino, who has been visiting Tehran.

She told the BBC ties were "improving" but the path ahead was "difficult".

Last month, Iran and six world powers agreed a deal to freeze Iran's nuclear programme in return for easing sanctions.

"The situation is very cautious, from both sides. This is the legacy of many years of mutual distrust," Ms Bonino said on Sunday.

However, on the question of the nuclear deal in particular, she said: "Both sides will in good faith make the maximum effort to turn it into an agreement."

Mr Zarif spoke with the EU's chief diplomat Catherine Ashton on Sunday and agreed to postpone talks until after Christmas.

On Sunday he urged all parties in the talks should avoid "troublesome" issues, without specifying what these were.

Iranian negotiators had been meeting with representatives of the "P5+1" group (US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany) to discuss technical details of the deal would be implemented.

A first round of technical talks on how to implement the accord was suspended earlier this month when the US expanded a sanctions blacklist.

However, as part of the deal, inspectors from the UN's nuclear agency visited Iran's Arak heavy water production plant on 8 December for the first time in more than two years.

Israeli and American critics of the Geneva deal say it gives Iran cover to expand the programme.

Earlier this month US Secretary of State John Kerry defended the deal before a panel in Congress and resisted calls to introduce additional sanctions.

Western nations have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire a nuclear weapon, but Iran says the programme is for solely peaceful ends.

8 December 2013 Last updated at 09:00 GMT

Iran nuclear crisis: UN inspectors visit

Arak reactor



The IAEA last visited the Arak plant in August 2011

Inspectors from the UN's nuclear agency are visiting Iran's Arak planned heavy water reactor for the first time in more than two years.

The visit comes two weeks after a six-month interim agreement was reached between Iran and world powers over the country's nuclear programme.

Iran has agreed to curb some nuclear activities for six months in return for sanctions relief.

It has promised not to commission or fuel the Arak reactor during that time.

The Arak plant is significant because if completed, it could open the way for the reprocessing of plutonium - a potential step towards a nuclear weapon.

Some world powers say Iran's uranium enrichment programme is geared towards making a weapon, but Tehran insists it only wants to be able to produce nuclear energy.

The inspection is the first real test of Iran's commitment to the interim agreement it signed with world powers two weeks ago, says the BBC's James Reynolds in neighbouring Turkey.

The one-day inspection is expected to be completed by Sunday afternoon, following which the inspectors will return to their headquarters in Austria, an Iranian atomic energy organisation spokesman said, according to Fars news agency.

Under the international deal, Iran will receive some \$7bn (£4.3bn) in sanctions relief while talks continue to find a more permanent agreement.

25 November 2013 Last updated at 21:49 GMT

Obama defends interim Iran nuclear deal



US President Barack Obama: "For the first time in a decade we have halted the progress on Iran's nuclear programme"

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Rouhani's Iran

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US President Barack Obama has defended a deal between Iran and world powers on Tehran's nuclear programme.

He acknowledged that obstacles remained but said "tough talk and bluster" did not guarantee US security.

The six-month interim deal struck in Geneva on Sunday saw Iran agree to curb some of its nuclear activities in return for sanctions relief.

The accord has been generally welcomed but Israel's prime minister called it "a historic mistake".

Some US senators also criticised the deal as too soft on Iran and have threatened to press for fresh sanctions.

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To cheers, he told the crowd that tough sanctions had led to a deal that for the first time in a decade would roll back key parts of Iran's nuclear programme”



[Mark Mardell](#) North America editor

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The West has long suspected Iran's uranium enrichment programme is geared towards making a weapon, but Tehran insists it only wants nuclear energy.

A raft of sanctions has been imposed on Tehran by the UN, US and European Union.

"Huge challenges remain, but we cannot close the door on diplomacy, and we cannot rule out peaceful solutions to the world's problems," Mr Obama said during an event in San Francisco.

"We cannot commit ourselves to an endless cycle of violence, and tough talk and bluster may be the easy thing to do politically, but it's not the right thing for our security."

Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that an Israeli team led by national security adviser Yossi Cohen would travel to Washington for talks on the deal.

"This accord must bring about one outcome: the dismantling of Iran's military nuclear capability," he said.

He has warned that Israel "will not allow a regime that calls for the destruction of Israel to obtain the means to achieve this goal".

Israel has not ruled out taking military action to stop Iran developing the capability of a nuclear bomb.



How Iranians reacted to the news of a deal on social media

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius says some EU sanctions on Iran could be lifted as early as next month.

Saudi Arabia - Iran's regional rival - cautiously welcomed the deal on Monday.

"This agreement could be a first step towards a comprehensive solution for Iran's nuclear programme, if there are good intentions," a statement said.

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague also welcomed the Geneva accord, but said it was only a "first step".

"We are right to test to the full Iran's readiness to act in good faith," he told the House of Commons on Monday.



Iran's negotiators were given a hero's welcome at Mehrabad airport in Tehran. The US, UK, France, Russia, China and Germany took part in the talks with Iran, hosted by EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton.

Under the deal which will last six months, Iran would receive some \$7bn (£4.3bn) in "limited, temporary, targeted, and reversible [sanctions] relief" while a permanent agreement is sought.

In return, Tehran has agreed to a series of measures.

Key [points of the deal](#) include:

- Iran will stop enriching uranium beyond 5% and "neutralise" its stockpile of uranium enriched beyond this point
- Iran will give greater access to inspectors including daily access at Natanz and Fordo - two of [Iran's key nuclear sites](#)
- There will be no further development of the Arak plant which it is believed could produce plutonium
- In return, there will be no new nuclear-related sanctions for six months if Iran sticks by the accord
- Some sanctions will be suspended on trading in gold and precious metals, on Iran's car-making sector and its petrochemical exports.
- Frozen oil sale assets will be transferred in instalments, bringing in some \$4.2bn (£2.6bn) of extra revenue



Blinken: "This is the first time in a decade we've stopped the advance" of Iran's nuclear programme

Iran's negotiators were welcomed at Tehran's Mehrabad airport by hundreds of cheering supporters carrying flowers and flags.

The agreement with Iran - the world's fourth-largest oil producer - prompted a fall in oil prices in early Asian trading with Brent crude falling by more than 2%.

Although Iran will not be allowed to increase its oil sales for six months, analysts say the deal is perceived by the markets as reducing risk in the Middle East.

In a nationwide broadcast on Sunday, President Hassan Rouhani repeated that his country would never seek nuclear weapons.

Mr Rouhani - regarded as a relative moderate - took office in August replacing the hardline Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The deal has also been backed by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say in nuclear matters.

Key sanctions against Iran since 2006

Year	United Nations	USA	European Union
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2006	Resolution 1737 bans supply, sale or transfer of materials that could be used for nuclear or ballistic weapons. Entities and individuals' assets frozen.	Trade between the two countries has been restricted since 1979.	
2007	Resolution 1747 bans Iran's arms exports, freezes assets and restricts travel of more individuals engaged in nuclear activities.		
2008	Resolution 1803 urges vigilance when dealing with Iranian banks. Introduces further asset freezes and travel bans.	US banks are further prevented from processing so-called "U-turn transfers" of money involving Iran.	
2009	No additional resolutions		
2010	Resolution 1929 imposes further restrictions on arms supply, including tanks and helicopters. More individuals and firms added to sanctions list.	Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment. Targets supply of fuel to Iran by non-US firms.	Bans technical assistance in oil sector. Restricts banks and adds names to UN travel ban list.
2011		US tightens restrictions against foreign firms and financial institutions trading in the fuel sector.	Assets of 243 Iranian entities and about 40 individuals are frozen. More visa bans imposed.
2012		Further sanctions against the oil sector and on banks accused of doing business with Tehran.	Bans Iran oil imports and freezes assets of the Iranian Central Bank. Further asset freezes and travel bans follow.
2013			New sanctions on Iran's Rial currency and the automotive sector.

Source: UN, US Treasury, AFP, United States Institute of Peace

A timeline of key events in US-Iran negotiations

10:07 PM Monday Nov 25, 2013

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Key dates in the Obama administration's contacts with Iran:

January 2009: President Barack Obama, in his first inaugural address, suggests a willingness to open contacts with Iran and other untrusted governments. "To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."

March 2009: Obama records a video message to Iranians to mark their New Year's celebration. Calls for a "new beginning" in the countries' relationship. The White House has released similar messages each year since.

June 2009: Hard-line Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad wins a second term in disputed election that sparks the ill-fated "Green Revolution." Obama administration criticized for not reacting more assertively to violent crackdown on protests.

July 2009: Iran detains three American hikers, one woman and two men, who enter Iranian territory from Iraq. Obama administration begins back-channel efforts through Oman and its leader, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, to free them.

October 2009: Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns meets with a top Iranian negotiator on the sidelines of nuclear talks at a villa near Geneva. Burns is later promoted to deputy secretary of state.

September 2010: Iran releases the female hiker on health grounds. She returns to the U.S. via Oman.

September 2011: Iran releases two male hikers who return to the U.S. via Oman. Informal contacts between American and Iranian officials begin in earnest at various locations, including the United Nations, Oman and through the Swiss, who represent U.S. interests in Iran in the absence of diplomatic relations between Washington and Tehran.

February 2013: The U.S. and its partners open a new round of nuclear negotiations with Iran in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Iranians refuse to meet separately with U.S. delegation led by new Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman, the administration's chief

negotiator.

March 2013: Seeking to open a separate channel with the Iranians, Deputy Secretary of State William Burns and Vice President Joe Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, fly secretly to the Omani capital of Muscat for a meeting with Iranian officials.

May 2013: Secretary of State John Kerry travels to Muscat for talks with Qaboos largely focused on ensuring the viability of the Omani channel ahead of Iran's election in June.

June 2013: Hassan Rouhani wins Iranian election, promising relief from sanctions that are crippling the country's economy and signaling a new willingness to engage on the nuclear issue.

August 2013: Rouhani sworn in as Iran's new president. Qaboos becomes the first foreign leader to visit him in office. Rouhani and Obama exchange letters. Burns and Sullivan hold two more secret meetings with Iranian officials before the annual U.N. General Assembly meeting in late September that Rouhani will attend. A framework for an initial nuclear deal begins to emerge as do plans for a potential meeting in New York between Obama and Rouhani.

September 2013: Obama and Rouhani both attend the General Assembly session. Efforts to arrange a face-to-face meeting fail, but Obama speaks to Rouhani by phone in the first conversation between a U.S. and Iranian leader since 1979. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif meets members of the P5+1 negotiating team, including Kerry and Sherman on the sidelines of the General Assembly. Kerry speaks alone with Zarif for roughly 30 minutes. Obama briefs Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the talks at a White House meeting on Sept. 30. The next day, Netanyahu delivers a powerful warning about Iran's intentions and trustworthiness in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly. He calls Rouhani a "wolf in sheep's clothing." In the following days, U.S. officials brief P5+1 partners on the clandestine meetings with Iran.

October 2013: Burns and Sullivan hold a fourth secret meeting with Iranian officials, and then a fifth, this time joined by chief U.S. negotiator Sherman. The framework nuclear deal hashed out in the early secret talks begins to gain clarity. A new round of larger nuclear talks with world powers is held in Geneva at which Sherman meets publicly with Zarif.

November 2013: World powers meet Iran again in Geneva. Burns and Sullivan are among the U.S. delegation but are not identified as such. They are kept hidden from public view, entering meeting rooms only after photographers and journalists are escorted out. They stay at a separate hotel from the main delegation and enter the talks through service entrances.

Nov. 23, 2013: Western powers and Iran reach initial deal on curbing Iran's nuclear program.

AP

25 November 2013 Last updated at 04:25 GMT

Iran welcomes nuclear deal which Israel calls 'mistake'



The Iranian delegation was welcomed by hundreds of supporters when it arrived at Tehran's Mehrabad airport

Cheering crowds have welcomed home the Iranian negotiators who secured a nuclear deal with world powers, while Israel called it a "historic mistake".

US President Barack Obama telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, seeking to reassure him of Washington's commitment to Israel.

Sunday's deal in Geneva prompted a fall in oil prices on markets on Monday.

Iran has agreed to curb some of its nuclear activities in return for about \$7bn (£4.3bn) in sanctions relief.



John Kerry on ABC's 'This Week': "Israel will be safer, the region will be safer"

Hundreds of cheering supporters greeted Iran's negotiators as they arrived back in Tehran on Sunday, after reaching an interim nuclear agreement with the US, Russia, China, France, the UK, and Germany.

Carrying flowers and Iranian flags at Tehran's Mehrabad airport, they hailed Iran's foreign minister, Mohammed Javad Zarif, as an "ambassador of peace" and chanted, "No to war, sanctions, surrender and insult".

Speaking to Iranian state television at the airport, Mr Zarif said Iran was prepared to take the necessary steps to keep the deal on track. But he said the interim, six-month deal agreed in Geneva could be halted by Tehran at any stage:

"All the measures that we will take, the confidence-building measures, are reversible, and they can be reversed fast. Of course, we hope we don't have to do this."

Sceptical about Iran

Earlier, the US President Barack Obama welcomed the deal, saying it would "help prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon".



Benjamin Netanyahu: "It's a historic mistake"

But Mr Netanyahu said Israel would not be bound by the agreement, saying he had a "duty to speak out".

"We cannot and will not allow a regime that calls for the destruction of Israel to obtain the means to achieve this goal."

His comments came as it was revealed that the US and Iran had held a series of face-to-face talks in recent months that paved the way for the agreement but were kept secret even from their allies.

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The gamble that Iran will keep its word is one thing, the gamble that Congress will do as he wishes is quite another - not one I would like to take a bet on”



[Mark Mardell](#) North America editor

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World powers suspect Iran's nuclear programme is secretly aiming at developing a nuclear

bomb - a charge Iran has consistently denied.

The deal reached early on Sunday in Geneva will last for six months, while a permanent agreement is sought.

Key [points of the deal](#) include:

- Iran will stop enriching uranium beyond 5%, and "neutralise" its stockpile of uranium enriched beyond this point
- Iran will give greater access to inspectors including daily access at the Natanz and Fordo nuclear sites
- There will be no further development of the Arak plant which it is believed could produce plutonium
- In return, there will be no new nuclear-related sanctions for six months if Iran sticks by the accord
- Iran will also receive sanctions relief worth about \$7bn (£4.3bn) on sectors including precious metals

The interim agreement with Iran - the world's fourth-largest oil producer - prompted a fall in oil prices in early Asian trading on Monday, with Brent crude falling by more than 2%.

Although Iran will not be allowed to increase its oil sales for six months, analysts say the deal is perceived by the markets as reducing risk in the Middle East.

Earlier, US Secretary of State John Kerry told [ABC's This Week](#) programme that the deal was a first step in making sure Iran could not have nuclear weapons.

"Israel will actually gain a larger breathing space in terms of the breakout capacity [to make a nuclear weapon] of Iran," he said.

He added that he hoped Congress would not pass new sanctions but Republican senators - as well as some from President Obama's Democratic party - have expressed concerns about the deal and say more sanctions are possible

In a nationwide broadcast on Sunday, President Rouhani repeated that his country would never seek a nuclear weapon.

"No matter what interpretations are given, Iran's right to enrichment has been recognised," he said.

Tehran insists it must be allowed to enrich uranium to use in power stations.

The deal comes just over three months since Mr Rouhani - regarded as a relative moderate - took office in August, the hardline Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

It has also been backed by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say in nuclear matters.

24 November 2013 Last updated at 17:30 GMT

Iran nuclear deal makes Mid-East safer

place - Kerry



John Kerry on ABC's 'This Week': "Israel will be safer, the region will be safer"

The US secretary of state has said the deal reached on Sunday over Iran's nuclear programme will make Israel and the Middle East a safer place.

John Kerry was speaking after Iran agreed to curb some of its nuclear activities in return for about \$7bn (£4.3bn) in sanctions relief.

Israel, however, has described the agreement as a "historic mistake".

Iran's president said its right to uranium enrichment had been recognised, but Mr Kerry denied this.

Tehran has, however, agreed to stop all enrichment above 5%.

"The gamble that Iran will keep its word is one thing, the gamble that Congress will do as he wishes is quite another - not one I would like to take a bet on"



[Mark Mardell](#) North America editor

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World powers suspect Iran's nuclear programme is secretly aiming at developing a nuclear bomb - a charge Iran has consistently denied.

The deal reached overnight in Geneva will last for six months, while a permanent agreement is sought.

US President Barack Obama welcomed the deal, saying it would "help prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon".

UK Prime Minister David Cameron said it "demonstrates how persistent diplomacy and tough sanctions can together help us to advance our national interest".

'Larger breathing space'

Mr Kerry told [ABC's This Week](#) programme that the US and Israel shared the same goal, and that the deal was a first step in making sure Iran could not have nuclear weapons.

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Analysis



Jonathan Marcus BBC diplomatic correspondent

Both the Americans and the Iranians appear to have come away from this interim deal smiling.

Both can say that they have received concessions but their practical effect will be limited. The real success here is that the ground has been prepared for further substantive talks.

The relief from sanctions has been targeted and specific. The US stresses that existing sanctions will continue to be enforced.

Iran is to a large extent freezing any further progress in its nuclear activities but many of its centrifuge cascades have not been operational; it has actually been limiting its enrichment work for whatever reason for some time; and the Arak facility is still some way from being operational.

So Iran is not giving up a lot, nor is it gaining a lot.

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"It leads us into the negotiation so that we guarantee that ... while we are negotiating for the tougher provisions, they will not grow the programme and their capacity to threaten Israel," he said.

"Israel will actually gain a larger breathing space in terms of the breakout capacity [to make a nuclear weapon] of Iran."

The US secretary of state added that he hoped Congress would recognise the benefits of the

deal and refrain from passing new sanctions.

However, leading Republican Senator Bob Corker said he had concerns about the deal and promised to hold the administration's "feet to the fire".

"This administration is long on announcements but very short on follow-through," he said in an interview for Fox News Sunday.

Senator Charles Schumer, from President Obama's Democratic party, was also disappointed by the Geneva agreement, which he said favoured Iran.

"As for additional sanctions, this disproportionality of this agreement makes it more likely that Democrats and Republicans will join together and pass additional sanctions when we return in December," he said in a statement.



The BBC's James Reynolds reports on the significance of the deal

Key [points of the deal](#) include:

- Iran will stop enriching uranium beyond 5%, and "neutralise" its stockpile of uranium enriched beyond this point
- Iran will give greater access to inspectors including daily access at Natanz and Fordo nuclear sites
- There will be no further development of the Arak plant which it is believed could produce plutonium
- In return, there will be no new nuclear-related sanctions for six months if Iran sticks by the accord
- Iran will also receive sanctions relief worth about \$7bn (£4.3bn) on sectors including

precious metals

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his cabinet it was a "historic mistake" and that his country would not be bound by the agreement.

"We cannot and will not allow a regime that calls for the destruction of Israel to obtain the means to achieve this goal.

"Israel has many friends and allies, but when they're mistaken, its my duty to speak out."

The Israeli comments came as it was revealed that the US and Iran had held a series of face-to-face talks in recent months that paved the way for the agreement but were kept secret even from their allies.

The talks were personally authorised by President Obama, AP reports quoting senior US administration officials.



Benjamin Netanyahu: "It's a historic mistake"

In a nationwide broadcast on Sunday, President Rouhani repeated that his country would never seek a nuclear weapon.

He hailed the deal, saying it met one of Iran's fundamental principles.

"No matter what interpretations are given, Iran's right to enrichment has been recognised," he said.

Tehran insists it must be allowed to enrich uranium to use in power stations.

The deal comes just months after Iran elected Mr Rouhani - regarded as a relative moderate - as its new president, succeeding the hardline Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

It has also been backed by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say in nuclear matters.

After four days of negotiations, representatives of the so-called P5+1 group of nations - the US, the UK, Russia, China, France and Germany - reached the agreement with Iran in the early hours of Sunday.

24 November 2013 Last updated at 09:31 GMT

Iran agrees to curb nuclear activity at Geneva talks

[Comments](#)



Iran is to curb its nuclear activities in return for limited relief from sanctions

Iran has agreed to curb some of its nuclear activities in return for about \$7bn (£4.3bn) in sanctions relief, after days of intense talks in Geneva.

US President Barack Obama welcomed the deal, saying it included "substantial limitations which will help prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon".

Iran agreed to give better access to inspectors and halt some of its work on uranium

enrichment.

President Hassan Rouhani said the deal recognised Iran's nuclear "rights".

But he repeated, in a nationwide broadcast, that his country would never seek a nuclear weapon.

Tehran denies repeated claims by Western governments that it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons. It insists it must be allowed to enrich uranium to use in power stations.

Analysis



James Reynolds BBC Iran correspondent

The first announcement of the most important agreement between Iran and the West in more than a decade was made on Twitter. Shortly before three in the morning in Geneva, the EU posted: "We have reached agreement between the E3+3 and Iran." Minutes later, Iran's chief negotiator, Mohammad Javad Zarif followed: "We have reached an agreement."

The immediate origins of this deal date to 14 June 2013, when Hassan Rouhani was elected president of Iran. Mr Rouhani promised to end his country's repeated confrontations with the outside world, beginning with the argument over its nuclear programme.

To bring about a deal, Mr Rouhani pursued two key policies. Firstly, he secured the public backing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for his diplomatic efforts. Secondly, the new president and his foreign minister broke precedent and pursued direct high-level contact with Iran's long time enemy, the US.

If there is to be a lasting nuclear agreement, it may spring from a reconciliation between these two countries.

The deal comes just months after Iran elected Mr Rouhani - regarded as a relative moderate - as its new president, in place of the hard-line Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

It has also been backed by Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

After four days of negotiations, representatives of the so-called P5+1 group of nations - the US, the UK, Russia, China, France and Germany - reached an agreement with Iran in the early hours of Sunday.

The specifics of the deal have yet to be released, but negotiators indicated the broad outlines:

- Iran will stop enriching uranium beyond 5%, the level at which it can be used for weapons research, and reduce its stockpile of uranium enriched beyond this point
- Iran will give greater access to inspectors including daily access at Natanz and Fordo nuclear sites
- In return, there will be no new nuclear-related sanctions for six months
- Iran will also receive sanctions relief worth about \$7bn (£4.3bn) on sectors including precious metals

US Secretary of State John Kerry said the agreement would make the region safer for its allies, including Israel.

But the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his cabinet it was a "historic mistake" and that his country reserved the right to defend itself.

"Today the world became a much more dangerous place because the most dangerous regime in the world made a significant step in obtaining the most dangerous weapons in the world," he said.

The Israeli comments came as it was revealed that the US and Iran had held a series of face-to-face talks over the past year that were kept secret even from their allies.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said it was an opportunity for the "removal of any doubts about the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme".



President Hassan Rouhani said the deal recognised Iran's nuclear "rights"

But he insisted that Iran had not given up its right to enrich uranium.

"We believe that the current agreement, the current plan of action as we call it, in two distinct places has a very clear reference to the fact that Iranian enrichment programme will continue and will be a part of any agreement, now and in the future," he said.

The US denied any such right had been conceded, while UK Foreign Secretary William Hague said the agreement was "good news for the whole world".

'Significant agreement'

The US state department [gave more details](#) of the deal, insisting that most sanctions would remain in place.

Restrictions on Iran's petrochemical exports and some other sectors would be suspended, bringing in \$1.5bn in revenue.



Obama: "Agreed to provide Iran with modest relief"

But Mr Obama warned that if Iran fail to keep its commitments, "we will turn off the relief and ratchet up the pressure".

This deal may be the most significant agreement between the world powers and Iran for a decade, says the BBC's James Reynolds in Geneva.

Negotiators had been working since Wednesday to reach an agreement that was acceptable to both sides.

As hopes of a deal grew stronger, foreign ministers of the P5+1 joined them in Geneva.

But it only became clear that a breakthrough had been made in Geneva shortly before 03:00 local time (02:00 GMT) on Sunday.

24 November 2013 Last updated at 02:50 GMT

Iran nuclear: Geneva talks 'reach deal'



James Reynolds: "The decision-makers have been in the room"

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Iran and six world powers meeting in Geneva have reached a deal on Tehran's nuclear programme, foreign ministers say.

No details have been released about the agreement, which has been reached after five days of negotiations.

Negotiators from the UK, US, Russia, China, France and Germany want Iran to stop enriching uranium in return for a loosening of sanctions.

Iran had earlier said it insisted on a "right to enrichment" in any deal.

This deal may be the most significant agreement between the world powers and Iran for a decade, says the BBC's Iran correspondent, James Reynolds, who is at the talks in Geneva.

Iranian and western negotiators are expected to speak at a news conference shortly.

US President Barack Obama will give a statement at 03:15 GMT.

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Negotiating positions for interim deal

P5+1 want Iran to:

- Halt uranium enrichment at medium level of purity
- Reduce concentration of existing stockpile of medium-enriched uranium or convert it to oxide form
- Not allow Arak heavy-water reactor to go into operation
- Commit to permitting more inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Iran wants the P5+1 to:

- Recognise its "right" to enrich uranium
- End international and unilateral sanctions
- [Q&A: Iran nuclear crisis](#)
- [Iran's nuclear sites](#)

Tehran denies repeated claims by Western governments that it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons, and insists it must be allowed to enrich uranium for power stations.

"We have reached an agreement," the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif [announced on his Twitter feed](#).

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius also confirmed the deal.

Minutes earlier, Michael Mann, spokesman for the EU foreign policy chief Baroness Catherine Ashton, who is leading the conference, [quoted her as saying](#): "We have reached agreement between E3+3 and Iran."

No details have been released. The White House says the US president, Barack Obama - who is in Washington - is preparing to make a statement about the deal.

Earlier, on Saturday evening, the deputy Iranian foreign minister, Abbas Araqchi, said "98% of the draft" had been agreed but that Tehran wanted a "right to enrichment" to be clearly stated in any deal.

"We are insisting on our right to enrichment, which should be clearly recognised in the draft agreement," Mr Araqchi was quoted as telling Iranian reporters late on Saturday - the fourth day of the negotiations.

Negotiators have been working since Wednesday to reach an agreement that is acceptable to both sides.

The talks had been scheduled to finish on Friday but were extended. Foreign ministers from the so-called P5+1 group of nations joined on Saturday, amid hopes of a breakthrough.

US officials said Secretary of State John Kerry, who arrived in Geneva early on Saturday, had the goal of "continuing to help narrow the differences and move closer to an agreement".

'Vigorous inspections'

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said on Saturday that a deal would be done only if it was a "truly worthwhile agreement".

Some US politicians had said they would push for more sanctions if the talks failed.



The fate of Iran's heavy-water plant at Arak is one of the issues to be resolved. The Geneva meeting follows a previous round of talks earlier this month.

On that occasion, foreign ministers flew to Geneva to conclude the negotiations, but they went home empty-handed.

Analysts say a major sticking point has been Iran's insistence on its right to enrich uranium - a process that yields material used to manufacture fuel for power stations, but can also be used in weapons.

Western diplomats are also concerned about a reactor Iran is building at Arak - an issue which disrupted the first round of talks.

President Obama has said any interim agreement would see the bulk of international and US sanctions remain, but that Iran would get sanctions relief worth between \$6bn and \$7bn.

The essence of the deal would involve Iran making no more advances in its nuclear programme and agreeing to "more vigorous inspections", he said.

23 November 2013 Last updated at 04:04 GMT

Iran nuclear talks: Foreign ministers gather in Geneva



Jeremy Bowen says the negotiations represent "war and peace" for the Middle East

The foreign ministers of six major powers are gathering in Geneva to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran.

The Russian and Iranian envoys, who are already in Geneva, are being joined by their counterparts from the US, the UK, France, China and Germany.

They have joined the conference amid hopes for an agreement which would see Iran curb its uranium enrichment in return for a loosening of sanctions.

Some US lawmakers say they will push for more sanctions if the talks fail.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, but some world powers suspect it is seeking a nuclear weapons capability.

Talks extended?

Negotiators have been working since Wednesday to try to find an agreement which is acceptable to Iran and the P5+1 negotiating partners - the US, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany.

The talks had been scheduled to conclude on Friday, but were extended amid hopes of a possible breakthrough, prompting the P5+1 foreign ministers to announce their attendance in person.

Negotiating positions for interim deal

P5+1 wants Iran to:

- Halt uranium enrichment at medium level of purity
- Reduce concentration of existing stockpile of medium-enriched uranium or convert it to oxide form
- Not allow Arak heavy-water reactor to go into operation
- Commit to permitting more inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Iran wants the P5+1 to:

- Recognise its "right" to enrich uranium
- End international and unilateral sanctions
- [Q&A: Iran nuclear crisis](#)
- [Iran's nuclear sites](#)
- [Analysis: Can gaps be bridged?](#)

State department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Mr Kerry would arrive in Geneva early on Saturday, "with the goal of continuing to help narrow the differences and move closer to an agreement".

Mr Kerry's participation in itself does not prove a deal is at hand, but it does show that the talks may have reached a critical stage, says the BBC's James Reynolds in Geneva.

Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague will also arrive on Saturday, as will his French counterpart, Laurent Fabius.

France has taken a harder line on Iran than other Western powers, encouraging its negotiating partners not to make too many compromises.

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle will also attend, said officials, while China said its foreign minister, Wang Yi, had left for Geneva early on Saturday.

EU foreign policy chief Baroness Catherine Ashton is leading the conference.

On Friday she briefly met Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif for a conversation which Iran's official Irna news agency described as "complicated and tough".

'Very hard'

The Geneva meeting follows a previous round of talks earlier this month.

On that occasion, too, foreign ministers flew to Geneva to conclude the negotiations, but they went home empty-handed.

Analysts say a major sticking point is Iran's insistence on its right to enrich uranium - a process that yields material used to manufacture fuel for power stations, but can also be used to make weapons.

Western diplomats are also concerned about a reactor Iran is building at Arak - an issue which disrupted the first round of talks.



The fate of Iran's heavy-water plant at Arak is one of the issues to be resolved. US politicians have indicated they will push forward with a bill proposing more sanctions against Iran next month if the talks fail.

US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said he would support "broadening the scope" of current oil and trade sanctions.

President Barack Obama's administration has said any interim agreement would see the bulk of international and US sanctions targeting Iran's nuclear programme remain in place, but that Iran would get sanctions relief worth between \$6bn and \$7bn.

The essence of the deal would involve Iran making no more advances in its nuclear programme and agreeing to "more vigorous inspections", he said.

21 November 2013 Last updated at 16:57 GMT

Iran and P5+1 struggle on nuclear deal in Geneva



The consensus on the talks is "useful" but "tough". [Continue reading the main story](#)

Iran under Rouhani

- [First 100 days](#)
- [Iranian views on Rouhani](#)
- [Positive signs](#)
- [Wrong-footing the West](#)

World powers and Iran are locked in difficult talks in Geneva as they struggle to secure an interim deal on Tehran's nuclear programme.

Iran spoke of "serious issues" that must be resolved, while one Western diplomat cited "considerable gaps".

A key Iranian negotiator said he did not think a deal would be concluded on Thursday, and it is unclear if foreign ministers will join the talks.

The deal could see Iran curb uranium enrichment for some sanctions relief.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, but some world powers suspect it is seeking a nuclear weapons capability.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

Negotiating positions for interim deal

P5+1 wants Iran to:

- Halt uranium enrichment to medium level of purity, or 20%
- Reduce concentration of existing stockpile of 20%-enriched uranium or convert it to oxide form
- Not allow Arak heavy-water reactor to go into operation
- Commit to permitting more inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Iran wants the P5+1 to:

- Recognise its "right" to enrich uranium
- End international and unilateral sanctions
- [Q&A: Iran nuclear crisis](#)
- [Analysis: Can gaps be bridged?](#)

The Geneva talks, which are scheduled to conclude on Friday, involve Iran and representatives of the P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia, plus Germany.

'Very hard'

After an afternoon session, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi was quoted by the Mehr news agency as saying: "I do not think the negotiations will reach a conclusion tonight."

Mr Araqchi said talks had been "useful" but that "serious issues remain a source of difference".

Of the prospects for Friday, he added: "One cannot judge about tomorrow."

One senior Western diplomat told Reuters: "Considerable gaps remain, and we have to narrow the gaps. Some issues really need to be clarified. I sensed a real commitment... from both sides."

Will it happen? We will see. But, as always, the devil is in the details."

One US source said simply: "It is very hard."

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told France 2 television: "This deal will only be possible if it has a firm base."

However, one diplomat told Reuters there was still a "very high probability" that foreign ministers would join the talks at some point.



Benjamin Netanyahu (left, with Vladimir Putin): "I promise you that [Iran] will not have nuclear weapons" All seven parties of the P5+1 and Iran were in talks on Thursday afternoon and more bilateral meetings are scheduled after that.

The sides failed to agree a deal at a previous round of talks earlier this month.

The US has said an interim agreement would see the bulk of international and US sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme remain in place.

The essence of the deal would involve Iran making no more advances in its nuclear programme and agreeing to "more vigorous inspections" in return for "a very modest amount of relief".

Concerns about the heavy-water reactor Iran is building at Arak were one of the factors that prevented agreement at the first round.

Iran's insistence on formal recognition of its right to enrich uranium was another.

As talks opened on Wednesday, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran would not step back "one iota" from what he said were its nuclear rights.

He also referred to Israel as a "rabid dog".

Israel has vehemently opposed the proposed deal and says it will not be obliged to honour it.

PM Benjamin Netanyahu, who is in Moscow, said: "He called Jews 'rabid dogs' and said that they were not human. The public responded to him with calls of 'Death to America! Death to Israel!'"

"Doesn't this sound familiar to you? This is the real Iran. We are not confused. They must not have nuclear weapons. And I promise you that they will not have nuclear weapons."

In Washington on Thursday, US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said it would move to impose new sanctions on Iran in December if the nuclear talks failed.



The fate of Iran's heavy water plant at Arak is one of the issues to be resolved

21 November 2013 Last updated at 01:43 GMT

Iran and P5+1 nuclear talks enter second day in Geneva



Catherine Ashton and Iran's foreign minister held talks on Wednesday

Negotiations between world powers and Iran on the future of Tehran's nuclear programme are entering a second day.

It follows a "positive" first meeting between chief negotiators Catherine Ashton and Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Both sides have expressed confidence that a breakthrough can be achieved in Geneva. However, Iran's Supreme Leader has set "red lines" for the meeting.

An interim deal could see Iran curb its uranium enrichment in return for easing of some international sanctions.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, but some world powers suspect it is seeking a nuclear weapons capability.

'Buying time'

The Geneva talks, which are scheduled to conclude on Friday, involve Iran and representatives of the P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia, plus Germany.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

Negotiating positions for interim deal

P5+1 wants Iran to:

- Halt uranium enrichment to medium level of purity, or 20%
- Reduce concentration of existing stockpile of 20%-enriched uranium or convert it to oxide form
- Not allow Arak heavy-water reactor to go into operation
- Commit to permitting more inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Iran wants the P5+1 to:

- Recognise its "right" to enrich uranium
- End international and unilateral sanctions
- [Q&A: Iran nuclear crisis](#)

The sides failed to agree a deal at a previous round of talks earlier this month.

The first plenary session on Wednesday was brief and introductory, focusing mainly on the process of the negotiations.

Iranian negotiator Abbas Araqchi told Iran's Fars news agency talks on any draft agreement would probably only begin on Thursday.

A number of bilateral meetings followed, including one between the EU's foreign policy chief, Baroness Catherine Ashton, and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Mr Zarif described the meeting as "good".

However, Secretary of State John Kerry said the US would not let any deal be used by Iran as a ploy to "buy time" to increase its nuclear capability.

Mr Kerry described the negotiations as the "best chance in a decade to halt progress and roll back Iran's programme".



AP Iran's heavy water

plant at Arak remains one key contentious issue

The US has said an interim agreement would see the bulk of international and US sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme remain in place.

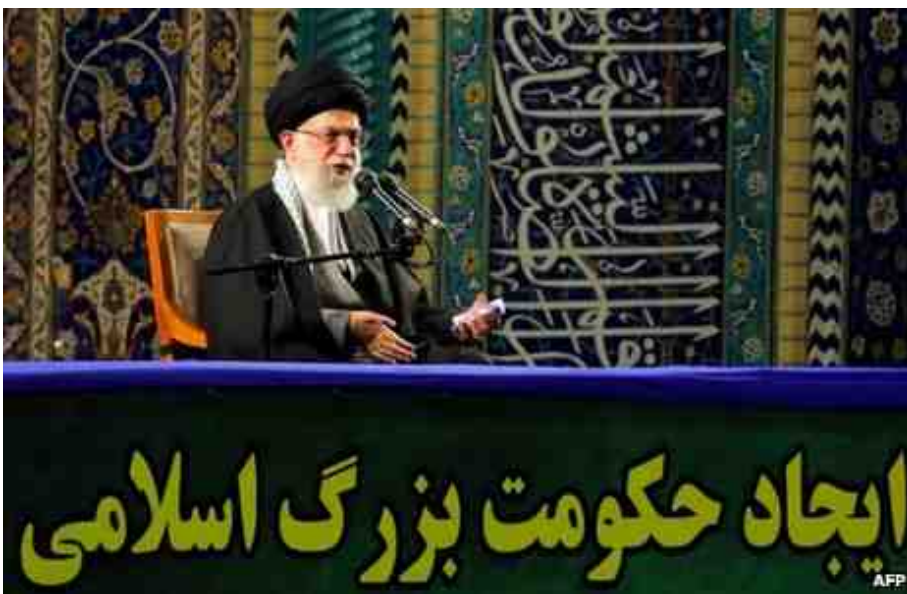
The essence of the deal would involve Iran halting advances of its nuclear programme and agreeing to "more vigorous inspections" in return for "a very modest amount of relief".

Concerns about the heavy-water reactor Iran is building at Arak was one of the factors that prevented agreement at the first round of talks.

Iran's insistence on formal recognition of its right to enrich uranium was another.

20 November 2013 Last updated at 10:39 GMT

Iran nuclear talks: Tehran 'will not step back one iota'



Ayatollah Khamenei warned the P5+1 not to "ratchet up the pressure on Iran"

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Iran under Rouhani

- [First 100 days](#)
- [Iranian views on Rouhani](#)
- [Positive signs](#)
- [Wrong-footing the West](#)

Iran's Supreme Leader has warned his country will not step back "one iota" from its nuclear rights, as it resumes talks with world powers in Geneva.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said he would not intervene directly in the negotiations, but that he had set "red lines" for Iran's representatives.

President Barack Obama meanwhile urged US senators not to impose new sanctions on Iran to allow time for diplomacy.

He said it was unclear whether it would be possible to reach an agreement soon.

"We don't know if we'll be able to close a deal with Iran this week or next week," he told a Wall Street Journal (WSJ) forum in Washington on Tuesday.

Iran stresses that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only, but world powers suspect it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

'Way forward'

In a televised speech on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran's negotiators had been set clear limits before they travelled to Switzerland for two days of meetings with representatives of the P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia, plus Germany.

They failed to agree a deal at a previous round of talks earlier this month mainly because of what diplomats said was Iran's insistence on formal recognition of its "right" to enrich uranium and France's concerns about the heavy-water reactor being built at Arak.



Javid Zarif's YouTube message: "Nuclear energy is not about joining club or threatening others"

"We do insist that we will not step back one iota from our rights," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

But he added: "We do not intervene in the details of these talks. There are certain red lines and limits. These have to be observed. They are instructed to abide by those limits."

The Supreme Leader, who has final say in Iran's nuclear matters, warned the P5+1 not to "ratchet up the pressure".

"They should know that the Iranian nation respects all nations of the world, but we will slap aggressors in the face in such a way they will never forget it."

[Continue reading the main story](#)

“Start Quote

We are not doing anything around the most powerful sanctions”

Barack Obama US President

The talks in Geneva will be led in the first instance by the EU's foreign policy chief, Baroness Catherine Ashton, and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

[In a video message posted on YouTube](#) on Tuesday, Mr Zarif urged the P5+1 to deal with Iran on an "equal footing" and stressed that for his country nuclear energy was "about securing the future of our children, about diversifying our economy, about stopping the burning of our oil, and about generating clean power".

"There is a way forward, a constructive path towards determining our destiny," he said.

Meanwhile, UK Prime Minister David Cameron spoke to Iran's President Hassan Rouhani by telephone. It was the first such conversation between British and Iranian leaders for more than a decade.

'Open the spigot'

Mr Obama told the WSJ forum that any interim agreement would see the bulk of international and US sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme remain in place.

"We are not doing anything around the most powerful sanctions. The oil sanctions, the banking sanctions, the financial services sanctions, those are the ones that have really taken a big chunk out of the Iranian economy," he added.



One contentious issue at the talks has been Iran's heavy-water reactor at Arak. Mr Obama explained that the "essence of the deal" would be that Iran would halt advances of its nuclear programme - including rolling back elements that might "get them closer to what we call breakout capacity, where they can run for a weapon before the international community has a chance to react", and agreeing to "more vigorous inspections".

"In return, what we would do would be to open up the spigot a little bit for a very modest amount of relief that is entirely subject to reinstatement if, in fact, they violated any part of this early agreement. And it would purchase a period of time," he said.

On Sunday, French President Francois Hollande said Iran would have to agree to halting its enrichment of uranium to a medium level of purity, or 20%; reducing its existing stockpile of enriched uranium, and stopping the construction of the Arak heavy-water reactor.

Experts say Iran's 20%-enriched uranium could be enriched to weapons-grade, or 90%, in a relatively short time, while spent fuel from the Arak reactor will contain plutonium suitable for use in nuclear weapons.

Iranian concession and Cameron phone call raise nuclear deal hopes

Signs of behind-the-scenes progress in dispute over nuclear programme as British PM calls Iranian president

- [Julian Borger](#), [Saeed Kamali Dehghan](#), and [Harriet Sherwood](#) in Jerusalem
- [The Guardian](#), Tuesday 19 November 2013 21.47 GMT



Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister. Photograph: Andreas Solaro/AFP/Getty Images

Differences between [Iran](#) and the west that have so far prevented a historic nuclear deal appear to have narrowed considerably as negotiators gather for a new round of talks in Geneva on Wednesday.

On Tuesday the Iranian foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, launched a slickly produced [YouTube channel](#) with a declaration that the path to a resolution of the decade-old dispute over Iran's nuclear programme was open, and called on the world powers to seize a "historic opportunity".

Zarif's move came as [David Cameron spoke on the phone to Hassan Rouhani](#), becoming the first British prime minister to speak to an Iranian president in a decade.

"The two leaders discussed the bilateral relationship between Britain and Iran welcoming the steps taken since President Rouhani took office, including the appointment of non-resident Charges d'Affaires last week," a spokesperson for the PM said. "They agreed to continue efforts to improve the relationship on a step by step and reciprocal basis."

"On Iran's nuclear programme, both leaders agreed that significant progress had been made in the recent Geneva negotiations and that it was important to seize the opportunity presented by the further round of talks which get underway tomorrow."

Mohammad Javad Zarif's YouTube message

The previous round of Geneva talks adjourned early, on 10 November, after an intense and dramatic three days of discussions fell just short of agreement following an intervention by the French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, to toughen the western bargaining position.

In a Saturday night meeting with the US secretary of state, John Kerry, Fabius insisted that the six powers at the talks – the US, France, the UK, Germany, Russia and France – should not grant Iran's right to uranium enrichment but should demand the cessation of Iran's construction work on a plutonium-producing heavy water reactor at Arak.

Zarif said he would have to consult Tehran on the 11th-hour changes, and the high-level talks broke up.

Since then, there have been clear signs of behind-the-scenes progress. On Sunday, Zarif was quoted in the semi-official Isna news agency as saying Iran's right to enrich was "non-negotiable", but adding that the Iranians "see no necessity for its recognition as a right".

"The right to enrichment does not need to be recognised because, according to the NPT [nuclear non-proliferation treaty], this right is inalienable," the foreign minister said.

If carried through to the negotiating table, the Iranian concession could remove a huge stumbling block. Western officials all accept that some degree of Iranian enrichment is an inevitable part of any eventual settlement but Washington and its allies have been reluctant to put that acceptance in writing as it would create a potentially dangerous precedent. Uranium enrichment is dual-purpose – it can produce fuel both for nuclear power stations and for warheads.

In the western camp, there have also been hints that a compromise could be found over Arak. The French insistence on a complete halt to work on the heavy water reactor was not shared by the whole government, a French defence source said.

"There is a debate going on in Paris, between the Quai d'Orsay [the foreign ministry] and the Élysée [the presidency] on that position," the source said.

German officials are believed to have shared some of the French concerns about a stopgap deal signed in haste in Geneva under pressure to produce results by the presence of Kerry and other foreign ministers. But the Germans disapproved of Fabius's decision to break ranks and make the divisions within the six-nation group public.

Talks since the last Geneva round appear to have resolved some of the differences inside the western camp. "I'm very optimistic there is an understanding. Some of the sensitive work will be shut down. The Europeans are hopeful this will not now be a problem," said Mark Hibbs, a nuclear expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The purpose of the interim deal under discussion in Geneva is to slow down the Iran programme, halting and rolling back some elements, in return for limited sanctions. The deal would last for six months, during which time negotiations would continue aimed at a more enduring settlement.

Among the elements on the table are a halt to Iranian production of medium-enriched uranium, of 20% purity, and a dilution of the existing stockpile of nearly 200kg or its conversion into

oxide for reactor fuel. That would add an extra month or so to the time Iran would need to turn it into weapons-grade uranium if it decided to make a weapon.



President Barack Obama speaking at the Wall Street Journal CEO Council annual meeting in Washington on Tuesday. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP

A cap on the stockpile of low-enriched, reactor-grade uranium is also likely to form part of the stopgap deal, and a freeze on Iran's enrichment capacity, halting the production and installation of new-model centrifuges, for example.

In return for such concessions, Iran would receive an estimated \$10bn (£6bn) in sanctions relief, in the form of unfreezing blocked bank accounts, and the end of restrictions on trade in gold, petrochemicals and aircraft parts.

Officials involved in the talks point out that each of these elements involves separate highly detailed, technical agreements, and so caution that striking a bargain could be a drawn-out and painstaking process.

However, both Washington and Tehran are under pressure to achieve a deal quickly to keep domestic political pressure at bay. The US Congress is threatening to pass new sanctions legislation, which could derail the negotiations.

"The US Congress has recently been seeking to approve a bill to increase sanctions against Iran," said Mohammad-Hassan Asafari a senior member of Iran's parliamentary committee on national security and foreign policy. "It has been decided that the negotiations be suspended if the bill gets through the US Congress."

Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, warned on Monday in a phone conversation with Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, that "excessive demands" could hamper any possible deal.

"At the recent Geneva talks good progress was made, but everyone must realise excessive demands could complicate the process towards a win-win agreement," the Iranian president

told Putin, according to the state English-language television Press TV. "From our point of view, there should not be a situation in which the will of parties to reach mutually acceptable agreement is affected."

The negotiations continue to put a severe strain on US-Israeli relations. Following persistent warnings against striking a deal in Geneva from the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, Kerry made it clear that he would not be visiting Jerusalem later this week, despite an announcement to that effect made by Netanyahu.

Instead, Kerry's aides said he would try to find time for a trip after the Thanksgiving holiday at the end of November.

On Monday, the secretary of state spoke about Netanyahu's right "to publicly state his position and defend what he believes is his interest". But, in a direct rebuttal of Israel's position, he added: "Nothing that we are doing here, in my judgment, will put Israel at any additional risk. In fact, let me make this clear, we believe it reduces risk."

The progress in Geneva came as the White House also appeared to be holding congressional hawks at bay in Washington.

Barack Obama held a meeting with US senators at the White House on Tuesday to ask them to hold off further sanctions for now while the talks appeared so close to a breakthrough.

Obama revealed details of the proposed deal with Iran during a conference in Washington on Tuesday afternoon.

It would relax some sanctions, but not oil exports or banking, in exchange for a temporary suspension in Iran's nuclear efforts while all sides seek a lasting solution.

"Some of the reporting has been inaccurate, understandably because the [countries involved] have kept the negotiations tight, but the essence of the deal would be that they would halt advances on their nuclear programme, they would roll back some elements that would get them closer to break out capacity where they could run for a weapon before the international community had a chance to react, and they would subject themselves to more vigorous inspections," Obama told a conference of business leaders.

"In return, [we would] open up the spigot a little bit for a very modest amount of relief that is entirely subject to reinstatement if they violate the agreement," he added.

"It would purchase a period of time, lets say six months, during which we could see if they could get to the end state of a position where we, the Israelis and the international community could say with confidence that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapon."

Details of the proposed deal, hitherto hazy, may add to pressure from Israel and hawkish Republicans in Washington who say Iran is being let off the hook.

18 November 2013 Last updated at 18:14 GMT

Iran's Rouhani warns West against 'excessive' nuclear demands



Hassan Rouhani stressed that Iran's nuclear programme was "peaceful"

President Hassan Rouhani has warned world powers trying to negotiate a deal over Iran's nuclear programme that they should not make "excessive demands".

He was quoted by an official website as telling Russian President Vladimir Putin that they could "complicate the process towards a win-win agreement".

The Kremlin said Mr Putin had stressed there was a "real chance" of a deal.

Representatives from Iran and the P5+1 group of nations will begin a new round of negotiations in Geneva on Wednesday.

Three days of high-level talks earlier this month failed to achieve a breakthrough.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said Iran been unable to accept a deal "at that particular moment", while Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif blamed divisions between Western powers and appeared to single out France for "gutting over half" of a US draft deal.

Some reports said France's delegation had wanted to place tight restrictions on the heavy-water reactor being built at Arak; others that the Iranian government's insistence on formal recognition of its "right" to enrich uranium had been the major obstacle.

Iran stresses that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only, but world powers suspect it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

'Essential' components

On Monday, Mr Rouhani was quoted by the dolat.ir website as telling his Russian counterpart: "At the recent Geneva talks good progress was made, but everyone must realise excessive demands could complicate the process towards a win-win agreement.

"From our point of view, there should not be a situation in which the will of parties to reach

mutually acceptable agreement is affected."

Their telephone conversation came a day after French President Francois Hollande outlined the "essential" components of any deal.

These included Iran halting its enrichment of uranium to a medium level of purity, or 20%; reducing its existing stockpile of enriched uranium, and stopping the construction of the Arak reactor.

Experts say Iran's 20%-enriched uranium could be enriched to weapons-grade, or 90%, in a relatively short time, while spent fuel from the Arak reactor will contain plutonium suitable for use in nuclear weapons.

In a separate development on Monday, an exiled Iranian opposition group claimed Iran had almost completed a new underground nuclear facility.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) said its sources had confirmed the existence of the site - codenamed "012" - at the Haft-e Tir military complex, outside the central city of Mobarakeh.

But it had no details of what kinds of activities were being carried out there.

The group revealed Iran's uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and the Arak facility in 2002, but more recent allegations about its nuclear programme were met with scepticism from the international community.

14 November 2013 Last updated at 16:42 GMT

John Kerry: Tiny portion of Iran assets may be freed



John Kerry briefed Senators in Washington on the Iran negotiations

The US Secretary of State, John Kerry, has said a "tiny portion" of Iranian assets may be freed

under a proposed deal on the country's nuclear programme.

Iran and world powers came "extremely close" to a deal in talks in Geneva at the weekend, Mr Kerry has told the BBC.

The Secretary of State is trying to persuade Congress not to impose new sanctions while negotiations continue.

The sanctions regime "does not really get eased" under the deal, he said.

In [an interview with MSNBC](#), Mr Kerry said that "95% or more of the current sanctions will remain in place".

[Continue reading the main story](#)

“Start Quote

You have to do something to make it worthwhile for them to say yes”

John Kerry US Secretary of State

Measures against Iran had reduced its annual oil sales revenue from \$110-120bn to \$40-45bn, which was frozen in banks around the world, Mr Kerry said.

He said that all he was talking about doing was releasing "a tiny portion" of the assets, "because you have to do something to make it worthwhile for them to say 'yes, we are going to lock our program where it is today and actually roll it back'".

On Wednesday Mr Kerry told a Senate banking committee that the US might lose negotiating partners if it imposed further economic penalties on Iran.

He said any new sanctions would risk ruining the talks.

Legislators on the banking panel are divided on the measure.

Negotiations between the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, Russia and China plus Germany - and Iran over its nuclear programme are expected to resume later this month in Geneva.

None of the differences is big enough to prevent agreement, Mr Kerry has previously said.

'No pause'

Some US legislators believe the White House is moving too quickly.

In a separate hearing on Wednesday, several House legislators said the US should take a harder line with Iran.

"The Iranian regime hasn't paused its nuclear programme," said Representative Ed Royce, a Republican.

"Why should we pause our sanctions efforts as the administration is pressuring Congress to do?"

The BBC's Suzanne Kianpour says that, according to senior administration officials, Mr Kerry

- as well as Vice-President Joe Biden - will continue to shuttle back and forth to Congress to lobby lawmakers against proposing new sanctions.

13 November 2013 Last updated at 20:40 GMT

Kerry warns fresh Iran sanctions could scuttle nuclear talks



Mr Kerry said the US and other powers had talked to Iran: "more in 30 hours than we have in those prior 30 years"

Secretary of State John Kerry has told US lawmakers any new sanctions against Iran would risk ruining talks over Tehran's nuclear programme.

He told a Senate banking committee that the US might lose negotiating partners if it imposed economic penalties.

The panel has been considering a fresh package but legislators are divided on the measure.

Mr Kerry has told the BBC that Iran and world powers had come "extremely close" to a deal at the weekend.

Before Wednesday's closed-door meeting with senators, Washington's top diplomat told reporters: "What we're asking everybody to do is calm down, look hard at what can be achieved and what the realities are."

None of the differences between P5+1 - the US, UK, France, Russia and China plus Germany - and Iran over its nuclear programme are big enough to prevent agreement, Mr Kerry has previously said.

Moving too quickly?

The group has considered offering relief to Tehran on some sanctions in exchange for nuclear concessions.

Mr Kerry has said the rest of the world must be certain that Iran is not trying to build nuclear

weapons. Iran says it is a civilian energy programme.

Negotiations are expected to resume later this month in Geneva.

The Obama administration has offered Iran some of its frozen overseas assets as part of the initial negotiations, but have insisted that the strictest restrictions will remain in place until Iran conclusively proves it is not trying to assemble nuclear weapons.

Some US legislators believe the White House is moving too quickly.

In a separate hearing, several House legislators said the US should take a harder line with Iran.

"The Iranian regime hasn't paused its nuclear programme," said Representative Ed Royce, a Republican.

"Why should we pause our sanctions efforts as the administration is pressuring Congress to do?"

IAEA signs cooperation deal with Tehran

By Chandrika Narayan, CNN

November 13, 2013 -- Updated 0236 GMT (1036 HKT)



Iran steps up cooperation with IAEA

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- No results in weekend talks on Iran's nuclear program
- But International Atomic Energy Agency hopes for better luck with deal signed Monday
- IAEA chief: "This is an important step, but this is a first step"

(CNN) -- Negotiations aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions may have stalled in Switzerland this weekend, but the head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency is optimistic about a new agreement struck with Tehran.

The International Atomic Energy Agency signed a cooperation deal with Iran on Monday.

It will give the IAEA greater access to long-unseen nuclear sites, including a heavy-water reactor in Arak, the very site that may have tripped up the Geneva talks.

Yukiya Amano, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said the agreement signified a new willingness by Tehran to cooperate with the IAEA.

"The atmosphere is very different, the meeting was very constructive," he said in an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour.

"This is an important step, but this is a first step, and much more needs to be done."

He said the deal would take a step by step approach to solving problems, bearing in mind the complications in dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue. Amano said Iran and the IAEA have agreed to focus on six practical measures that would be implemented in a three-month time line.

"The joint statement says Iran and IAEA agree to resolve all present and past issues," Amano said. "Issues that are not included in the first step will be addressed in the subsequent steps."

The IAEA's talks with Iran are separate from the big power diplomacy, he said, referring to the recent nuclear talks between world powers and Iran in Switzerland, which disintegrated on Sunday.

[Hopes for a deal had soared after top diplomats rushed to Geneva](#), but then faded amid divisions among the P5+1 countries. Representatives from Iran and those six countries are scheduled to meet again in Geneva on November 20, in another attempt to resolve the decade long dispute.

"Geneva talks and IAEA talks are independent, different and separate," Amano said. "We are focusing on verification and technical issues."

State Department: "We made significant progress in Geneva"

The IAEA chief has reason to be optimistic, given that this is his first agreement with Iran in years, said Joseph Cirincione, president of Ploughshares Fund, a public grant-making foundation focused on nuclear weapons policy and conflict resolution.

"This is for real, these guys are not playing a con game," Cirincione said. "These Iranians are a

much more pragmatic group. They want to make a deal, they want to end Iran's isolation. They want to end sanctions. They are willing to make serious concessions."

On Tuesday, the U.S. State Department also sounded upbeat, saying significant progress was made in Geneva.

"The P5+1 is united," said Jen Psaki, State Department spokesperson. "There is still a gap between what language might be appropriate; that the Iranians are prepared to accept."

Iran has always insisted its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Western powers and Israel accuse it of harboring ambitions for a nuclear weapon.

Iran's refusal to stop enriching uranium has led to crippling sanctions that have stunted its economy, slashed its crude oil exports and triggered widespread inflation at home.

U.S. senators from both parties have pushed for tougher sanctions to increase pressure on Iran even as the Geneva talks showed early signs of promise last week.

But the White House warns lawmakers that tightening sanctions on Iran could derail the diplomatic push to curb Tehran's nuclear program.

Secretary of State John Kerry will push diplomacy as he heads to Capitol Hill on Wednesday to meet with members of the Senate Banking Committee. Some of the restrictions originated in that Banking Committee.

The State Department said Kerry would make it clear that putting new sanctions in place would be a mistake.

"We are still determining if there is a diplomatic path forward," Psaki said. "What we are asking for right now is a pause, a temporary pause, in sanctions. We are not taking away sanctions. We are not rolling them back. This is about ensuring our legislative strategy and our negotiating strategy are running hand in hand."

"The momentum for this deal is almost irresistible," said Cirincione.

"It may not happen November 20. It may take a few more weeks, but it is crystal clear, the majority of P5+1 believe a deal is in our best interest."

12 November 2013 Last updated at 10:28 GMT

Iran blames Western powers for nuclear talks failure



Mohammad Zarif

remains positive about the prospect of a breakthrough

Iran's foreign minister has blamed divisions between Western powers for the failure to agree a deal on its nuclear programme on Saturday.

Mohammad Javad Zarif rejected US Secretary of State John Kerry's claim that Iran had been unable to accept the deal "at that particular moment".

He said "no amount of spinning" could change what had happened in Geneva, but it could "further erode confidence".

Mr Zarif appeared to blame France for "gutting over half" of a US draft deal.

Representatives from Iran and the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, Russia and China plus Germany - will meet again on 20 November.

Iran stresses that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only, but world powers suspect it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

'Not Iran's fault'

Some reports said the latest talks failed because France had wanted to place tight restrictions on the heavy-water reactor being built at Arak; others that the Iranian government's insistence on formal recognition of its "right" to enrich uranium had been the major obstacle.

During a visit to Abu Dhabi on Monday morning, Mr Kerry told reporters that the P5+1 had been "unified on Saturday when we presented our proposal to the Iranians".

"We are committed to constructive engagement. Interaction on equal footing key to achieve shared objectives"

Mohammad Javad Zarif Iranian Foreign Minister

"The French signed off on it, we signed off on it, and everybody agreed it was a fair proposal," he added. "Iran couldn't take it at that particular moment."

Later, Mr Zarif [responded to the claim on Twitter](#).

"No amount of spinning can change what happened within 5+1 in Geneva from 6pm Thursday

to 5:45pm Saturday. But it can further erode confidence," he wrote.

"Mr Secretary, was it Iran that gutted over half of US draft Thursday night? And publicly commented against it Friday morning?"

Mr Zarif appeared to be referring to French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who on Friday morning cautioned in a statement that his country wanted a "credible agreement". At the end of the day's talks, Mr Fabius told France Inter radio that Paris could not accept a "fool's game".

A Russian foreign ministry source was also quoted by the Interfax news agency on Tuesday as saying the failure was "not Iran's fault".

"Iran was happy about the draft joint document, but since a decision during the negotiations is approved by consensus, it was impossible to reach a final agreement," the source said.

Mr Zarif was nevertheless positive about the prospect of a breakthrough.

"We are committed to constructive engagement. Interaction on equal footing key to achieve shared objectives," he wrote.

Mr Kerry also told the BBC that negotiators had been "very, very close... extremely close" to agreeing a deal.

"I think we were separated by four or five different formulations of a particular concept," he said.

On Monday, Mr Fabius denied responsibility for the talks' failure and revealed that there had been several issues that "still need to be discussed with the Iranians", including the Arak facility.

Tehran says the reactor is intended for the production of radioisotopes for medical purposes, but its spent fuel will contain plutonium suitable for use in nuclear weapons.

Questions also remain over Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to a medium level of purity, or 20%. Experts say it could be enriched to 90%, the level required for a nuclear bomb, in a relatively short time.

12 November 2013 Last updated at 05:01 GMT

Iran talks came 'extremely close' to deal - John Kerry



John Kerry said it would take time for America to resolve its differences with Iran

US Secretary of State John Kerry has told the BBC that none of the differences between world powers and Iran over its nuclear programme are big enough to prevent agreement.

He said they came "extremely close" to a deal at the weekend in Geneva.

But he said the rest of the world had to be certain that Iran was not pursuing a nuclear weapons programme.

Three days of negotiations ended without a breakthrough, but diplomats will meet again on 20 November.

"We were very very close actually, extremely close," Mr Kerry said.

Unity

He reaffirmed that it would "take time to work through differences" between the US and Iran.

"We haven't been speaking for 35 years," Mr Kerry said. "We just talked more in 30 hours than we have in those prior 30 years."

Iran says that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only, but world powers suspect it is seeking to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

Some reports said the latest talks failed because France had wanted to place tight restrictions on Iran's heavy-water plant being built in Arak.

However, US diplomats have said the Iranian government's insistence on formal recognition of its "right" to enrich uranium had been the major obstacle.



The plant in Arak is reportedly among the issues still under discussion Mr Kerry said it was critical to be certain that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons programme, and that negotiations about enrichment were ongoing.

"They have to see that there is a standard by which they might be able to do something - provided they meet certain standards in order to do it," he told the BBC.

Iran backed out of a deal on the last day of talks, he added.

"We had a unity on Saturday in a proposal put in front of the Iranians... but they felt they had to go back."

Representatives from Iran and the P5+1 - the US, UK, France, Russia and China plus Germany - will meet again in Geneva later this month to resume discussions.

Meanwhile Iran has reached an agreement with the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), over its nuclear programme. The deal opens the way for UN inspectors to gain better access to two key nuclear sites in Iran.

Experts say progress between Iran and the IAEA is a vital parallel track to the talks between Iran and the major powers.

11 November 2013 Last updated at 13:59 GMT

Iran backed out of nuclear deal - John Kerry



John Kerry: "Iran couldn't take it at that particular moment"

US Secretary of State John Kerry has said Iran backed out of a deal on its nuclear programme during talks with world powers in Geneva on Saturday.

Amid reports that France's reservations scuppered an agreement, Mr Kerry told reporters in Abu Dhabi: "The French signed off on it; we signed off on it."

Iran had been unable to accept the deal "at that particular moment", he added.

Mr Kerry said he hoped in the next few months they could "find an agreement that meets everyone's standards".

Representatives from Iran and the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, Russia and China plus Germany - will meet again on 20 November.

Analysis



Jonathan Marcus BBC diplomatic correspondent

There has been a denial that the Western camp was divided, not least from the US Secretary of State John Kerry himself.

Speaking in the UAE, he noted that France was as much on board as the other Western players. It was Iran, he said, that "couldn't take it at that particular moment".

Mark Hibbs, a Berlin-based nuclear expert, says that might be a diplomatic way of minimising the tensions in the Western camp.

However, he believes the outcome in Geneva was by no means a fiasco. Not only the French, but others in the Western camp, were uneasy at the sudden breakneck pace of the talks.

As Mr Hibbs puts it: "Some of the Europeans were concerned that Washington was moving forward at a pace with which they were not comfortable."

- [Positive signs despite breakdown of talks](#)

Iran stresses that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only, but world powers suspect it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

In a separate development on Monday, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Yukiya Amano, said the agency had agreed a "[roadmap for co-operation](#)" with Iran to help resolve remaining issues.

Six specific access or information issues will be addressed over the next three months, offering a clear test of Iran's willingness to provide greater clarity about its activities, says the BBC's diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus.

Progress between Iran and the IAEA is seen by experts as a vital parallel track to the talks between Iran and the major powers, he says.

Mr Amano said the deal was "an important step". It opens the way for inspectors to visit a heavy-water plant being built in Arak and the Gachin uranium mine in Bandar Abbas, and for measures requested by the UN watchdog to be implemented.

Tehran says the reactor in Arak is intended for the production of radioisotopes for medical purposes, but its spent fuel will contain plutonium suitable for use in nuclear weapons.

Powers 'unified'

Some reports said the latest talks failed because France had wanted to place tight restrictions on the facility in Arak.

"Everybody agreed it was a fair proposal"

John Kerry US Secretary of State

However, US diplomats said the Iranian government's insistence on formal recognition of its "right" to enrich uranium had been the major obstacle.

[The Jerusalem Post quoted a senior US official as saying](#) the P5+1 had approved a working document, but that it had been "too tough" for the Iranians.

Speaking at a news conference with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Monday, Mr Kerry said: "The P5+1 was unified on Saturday when we presented our proposal to the Iranians.

"The French signed off on it, we signed off on it, and everybody agreed it was a fair proposal.

"Iran couldn't take it at that particular moment; they weren't able to accept."

Mr Kerry also said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's public dismissal of the

offer as a "bad deal" for the world had been premature.

"We are confident that what we are doing can actually protect Israel more effectively and provide greater security," he added.

'Issues'

Mr Kerry's comments on the prospects of an interim accord were echoed by French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who told Europe 1 radio: "We are not far from an agreement with the Iranians, but we are not there yet."



The heavy-water reactor and plant at Arak could be operational next year

Responding to the reports that Paris was behind the failure of the talks, he said: "France is neither isolated nor a country that follows the herd. It is independent and works for peace."

Mr Fabius revealed that there had been several issues that "still need to be discussed with the Iranians", including the facility in Arak, which could be operational by the end of 2014.

"If we don't reach an accord, it would be a considerable problem in a few months"

Laurent Fabius French Foreign Minister

"We have to make arrangements for this reactor in Arak not to be activated as planned, for it not to lead to an atomic bomb," Mr Fabius said.

Questions also remain over Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to a medium level of purity, or 20%. Experts say it could be enriched to 90%, the level required for a nuclear bomb, in a relatively short time.

"This stock at 20% must be dismantled and come back to 5%. The Iranian side still needs to make an effort [on this]," Mr Fabius explained.

But he also warned that the failure to agree a deal with Iran "would be a considerable problem in a few months".

10 November 2013 Last updated at 01:19 GMT

Iran nuclear: Geneva talks 'something to

build on'



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif: "We are all on the same wavelength"

Talks between world powers and Iran have failed to reach an agreement on Tehran's nuclear programme.

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton told a press conference that there had been a lot of "concrete progress but some differences remain".

Baroness Ashton, who coordinated talks, said they would resume on 20 November.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he was not disappointed with the outcome, and that the talks were "something we can build on".

He said all parties were "on the same wavelength" and "there was the impetus to reach an agreement".

Meanwhile US Secretary of State John Kerry said: "There is no question in my mind that we are closer now than we were before."

Move forward



US Secretary of State John Kerry: "Diplomacy takes time"

The international powers are concerned that Tehran is trying to build a nuclear weapon - but Iran says its programme is peaceful.

A proposal that was floated would require Iran to freeze expansion of nuclear activity in return from limited relief from economic sanctions.

Delegates had earlier suggested there was "good progress".

Analysis



James Reynolds BBC News, Geneva

It was striking to see the respective chief negotiators Mohammad Javad Zarif and Lady Ashton walk in together to deliver a joint final statement. They appeared to be relaxed in each other's company.

But it's also clear that they have not reached a deal. Serious differences clearly remain. The two negotiators wouldn't reveal what those differences were. Instead they agreed to meet again.

These three days of talks were the most intensive negotiations about Iran's nuclear programme for many years. It's worth noting in particular the fact that the US Secretary of State John Kerry took part in more than eight hours of direct talks with his Iranian counterpart.

This marked the most extensive high-level contact between the US and Iran since the 1979

Islamic revolution. That, in itself, counts as something of a breakthrough.

But diplomatic sources said France had wanted tougher terms for Iran.

Before the late-night press conference, the French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said the three days of negotiations had ended without a deal.

"The meetings in Geneva have made it possible to move forward," he said.

"But we have not yet managed to conclude, because there are still some questions remaining to be dealt with."

Meanwhile Mr Kerry told reporters: "We have not only narrowed differences and clarified those that remain but we made significant progress in working through the approaches to this question of how one reins in a programme and guarantees its peaceful nature."

He added that the window for diplomacy would not stay open indefinitely.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had urged the world powers not to miss an "exceptional opportunity" to seal an agreement.

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague had also urged negotiators to "seize the moment".

The Geneva talks involve Iran and the P5+1: the US, Russia, Britain, France and China as permanent UN Security Council members, plus Germany.

Iran nuclear deal hopes rise as foreign ministers fly into Geneva

UK, US, French and German representatives visit as Kerry and Ashton 'discuss draft statement' with Iranian counterpart Zarif

- [Julian Borger](#) and [Saeed Kamali Dehghan](#) in Geneva
- [The Guardian](#), Saturday 9 November 2013



The US secretary of state, John Kerry, arrives in Geneva for Iran nuclear talks after a stormy meeting with Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu. Photograph: Denis Balibouse/AP [John Kerry](#), William Hague and foreign ministers from France and Germany all made unplanned flights to Geneva on Friday in an attempt to seal a nuclear deal with [Iran](#) and end a decade-long impasse with the country.

There were also reports on Friday night that the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, was flying in, despite earlier official denials that he would attend. The convergence on Switzerland of ministers from major world powers was meant to boost negotiations that have been under way since Thursday among senior officials.

As the talks closed on Friday night, officials were saying that the negotiations had been productive and that they would resume again on Saturday morning.

Kerry put off a planned trip to Morocco and Algeria to focus on the Geneva talks, while Iranian journalists were told to delay flights back to Tehran.

The focus of the talks shifted from formal sessions at Geneva's Palace of Nations to impromptu meetings at the European mission hosted by the EU foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton. Kerry, Hague, the French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, and his German counterpart, Guido Westerwelle, gathered there. After night fell, Ashton and Kerry met the Iranian foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, for three-way discussions that western officials described as the key session of the talks so far.

The officials said Kerry's arrival did not signal that a deal was ready to be signed but rather that the issues dividing the sides had risen to a level that only foreign ministers, in consultation with their heads of government, could resolve.

The aim of the talks is to agree a joint statement laying out a roadmap towards a peaceful resolution of the nuclear standoff. Iranian officials said a draft of the statement had been completed by the time Ashton, Kerry and Zarif met at the EU mission.

According to Zarif and western officials, it was to include details of an interim deal that would slow down Iranian uranium enrichment and relax some sanctions, providing time to work out a more comprehensive, long-term agreement. The outline of that goal would also be sketched out in the joint statement, on Iranian insistence. Zarif has said he does not want to negotiate piecemeal accords without knowing what the end point of the process would be.

Kerry arrived in Geneva in the early afternoon after a stormy meeting with the Israeli prime minister, [Binyamin Netanyahu](#), who made clear that he rejected the intended interim deal with Iran on the grounds that it represented a step towards dismantling sanctions without a total halt to Iranian enrichment.

Western officials said Netanyahu's remarks were aimed at his own rightwing supporters and that his vocal opposition would eventually make it easier to "sell a deal" to the Tehran leadership and Iranian public.

The White House said President Obama called Netanyahu on Friday to smooth things over. "The president provided the prime minister with an update on negotiations in Geneva and underscored his strong commitment to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, which is the aim of the ongoing negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran," according to a White House description of the call. "The president and prime minister agreed to continue to stay in touch on this issue."

On arriving in Geneva, Kerry said he had come at Ashton's invitation to help close the deal with Iran.

"I want to emphasise there are still some very important issues on the table that are unresolved. It is important for those to be properly, thoroughly addressed," the US secretary of state said. "We hope to try to narrow those differences, but I don't think anybody should mistake that there are some important gaps that have to be closed."

Fabius, who arrived two hours earlier, said he had made the impromptu trip "because these negotiations are difficult but important for the regional and international security".

He said: "It is a question of reaching an agreement which represents a first solid step in addressing the international concerns over the Iranian nuclear programme. There has been a lot of progress, but so far nothing has been finalised."

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, an Iranian deputy foreign minister, confirmed in the afternoon that a draft agreement had been drawn up and would be discussed at the crucial meeting involving Ashton, Kerry and Zarif.

"The text is ready and the initial negotiations about this text will be made in this trilateral meeting," Takht-Ravanchi was quoted as saying by the semi-official Mehr news agency.

He added: "We have announced that banking and oil sanctions should also be discussed in the first step."

If that is true, and Iran is insisting on such large-scale sanction relief as part of the first step, it would signal a serious obstacle to agreement. Senior US officials have made it clear they do not think major oil and banking sanctions should be part of an initial confidence-building accord.

Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that its head, Yukiya

Amano, would visit Tehran on Monday in an attempt to accelerate parallel long-running talks between Iran and the agency aimed at clearing up allegations about past Iranian nuclear work.

Iran has claimed the allegations are based on forged evidence, but western intelligence claims that until at least 2003 Iran had a large-scale programme to create weapons. The IAEA has frequently complained that the previous Iranian government did not co-operate with its investigation, but agency officials have said since the election of reformist president Hassan Rouhani in June that the situation has improved.

8 November 2013 Last updated at 05:20 GMT

John Kerry changes plans to join Iran nuclear talks



Iran's foreign minister Mohammad Zarif said the sides could sit down by Friday morning to prepare "some sort of a joint statement"

[Iran under Rouhani](#)

- [Has Rouhani wrong-footed the West?](#)
- [Ayatollah-approved diplomacy](#)
- [Q&A: Nuclear issue](#)
- [What might nuclear deal look like?](#)

US Secretary of State John Kerry is to fly to join negotiations in Geneva on Iran's nuclear

programme, amid rising expectation of a breakthrough.

Mr Kerry had been on a tour of the Middle East, but changed his plans at the invitation of the EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton.

Iran's foreign minister said a deal could be reached on Friday.

The talks bring together world powers - the five permanent Security Council members plus Germany (P5+1) - and Iran.

The BBC's Kim Ghattas, who is travelling with Mr Kerry, says his dramatic decision to change his travel plans and go to Geneva is a clear sign that a deal with Iran may be within reach.

A senior state department official told the BBC that he was going "to help narrow differences in negotiations" between Iran and the 5P+1.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told CNN on Thursday that Iran would not suspend uranium enrichment completely but could "deal with the various issues on the table".

The West suspects Iran's uranium enrichment programme is a step towards building nuclear weapons.

On Thursday, the US confirmed some sanctions relief was being offered in return for "concrete, verifiable measures".

But Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has said a nuclear deal would be a "historic" mistake, accusing Iran of only offering fake concessions.

Mr Kerry is due to meet Mr Netanyahu early on Friday before flying to Geneva.

'End game'

Mr Zarif said the sides could sit down by Friday morning to prepare "some sort of a joint statement" that would address three elements - a common objective, an "end game... in less than a year" and mutual confidence-building measures.

Iran's 'three-phase plan'

- Reportedly presented by Mohammad Zarif at Geneva talks in October
- Phase 1 (six-month timeframe): Sanctions to be lifted; re-doubled international inspections
- Phase 2: Details sketchy, but involves confidence-building measures about peaceful nature of Iran's efforts
- Phase 3: End state in which Iran's nuclear programme is certified as peaceful by the international community
- [Could Iran plan defuse standoff?](#)
- [Q&A: Iran nuclear crisis](#)
- [Iran's key nuclear sites](#)

Iran's lead negotiator, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, said the world powers had "clearly" accepted his country's proposed framework and were now discussing details.

However, there was no official confirmation from the P5+1 - the US, Russia, China, the UK,

France and Germany.

In Washington, White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters on Thursday that the six powers "would consider limited, targeted, and reversible relief that does not affect our core sanctions architecture".

The broader sanctions regime would be maintained until there was a "final, comprehensive, verifiable" agreement that resolved international concerns, he said.

If Iran failed to show progress on its nuclear programme, the "moderate" sanctions relief could be reversed, and stiffer sanctions could be imposed, he added.

Hopes of a long-awaited deal on curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions were given fresh momentum this year by the election of President Hassan Rouhani, seen as a relative moderate.

Since 2006 the UN Security Council has imposed a series of sanctions - including asset freezes and travel bans - on entities and people involved in Iran's nuclear programme.

Separate US and EU sanctions have targeted Iran's energy and banking sectors, crippling its oil-based economy. Iran wants the sanctions lifted.

Speaking at a conference in Jerusalem before the talks began, Mr Netanyahu said the proposals would allow Iran to retain the capabilities to make nuclear weapons.

"Israel understands that there are proposals on the table in Geneva today that would ease the pressure on Iran for concessions that are not concessions at all," he said.

Mr Netanyahu said economic sanctions had brought the Iranian economy to the "edge of the abyss" and the P5+1 could "compel Iran to fully dismantle its nuclear weapons programme".

"Anything else will make a peaceful solution less likely. Israel always reserves the right to defend itself, by itself, against any threat," Israel's prime minister said.

7 November 2013 Last updated at 20:14 GMT

Iran says Geneva nuclear deal possible on Friday



The talks in Geneva are scheduled to last two days

[Iran under Rouhani](#)

- [Has Rouhani wrong-footed the West?](#)
- [Ayatollah-approved diplomacy](#)
- [Q&A: Nuclear issue](#)
- [What might nuclear deal look like?](#)

The Iranian foreign minister has said he believes an agreement with world powers on Iran's nuclear programme is possible by the end of talks on Friday.

Mohammad Zarif told CNN that Iran would not suspend uranium enrichment completely but could "deal with the various issues on the table".

The foreign powers did not comment on the progress of the talks in Geneva.

But the US confirmed some sanctions relief was being offered in return for "concrete, verifiable measures"

Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has said a nuclear deal would be a "historic" mistake, accusing Iran of only offering fake concessions.

The five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany (P5+1) opened two days of talks with Iran on Thursday.

The West suspects Iran's uranium enrichment programme is a step towards building nuclear weapons.

'End game'

Mr Zarif said the sides could sit down by Friday morning to prepare "some sort of a joint statement" that would address three elements: a common objective, an "end game... in less than a year" and mutual confidence-building measures.

He has talked of a "three-phase plan" previously.

Iran's lead negotiator, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, said the world powers had

"clearly" accepted his country's proposed framework and were now discussing details.

Iran's 'three-phase plan'

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Since 2006 the UN Security Council has imposed a series of sanctions - including asset freezes and travel bans - on entities and people involved in Iran's nuclear programme.

Separate US and EU sanctions have targeted Iran's energy and banking sectors, crippling its oil-based economy. Iran wants the sanctions lifted.

Israeli warning

Speaking at a conference in Jerusalem before the talks began, Mr Netanyahu said the proposals would allow Iran to retain the capabilities to make nuclear weapons.

"Israel understands that there are proposals on the table in Geneva today that would ease the pressure on Iran for concessions that are not concessions at all," he said.

"This proposal would allow Iran to retain the capability to make nuclear weapons.

"Israel totally opposes these proposals. I believe that adopting them would be a mistake of historic proportions. They must be rejected outright."

Mr Netanyahu said economic sanctions had brought the Iranian economy to the "edge of the abyss" and the P5+1 could "compel Iran to fully dismantle its nuclear weapons programme".

"Anything else will make a peaceful solution less likely. Israel always reserves the right to defend itself, by itself, against any threat," Israel's prime minister said.

Iran's medium enriched uranium: Key levels



*Lower limit depends on the enrichment process
Sources: IAEA, NPEC, The Economist

7 November 2013 Last updated at 09:26 GMT

Iran nuclear issue not insoluble, says FM Javad Zarif



The West suspects Iran's programme is arms production - a charge Iran denies

[Iran under Rouhani](#)

- [Has Rouhani wrong-footed the West?](#)
- [Ayatollah-approved diplomacy](#)
- [Q&A: Nuclear issue](#)
- [What might nuclear deal look like?](#)

Iran's foreign minister has expressed cautious optimism about upcoming talks on Iran's nuclear programme, saying the issue is "not insoluble".

World powers and Iran are due to meet in Geneva later on Thursday for a further round of discussions.

Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said the talks would be "highly laboured" but the aim was to "cross over the wall of distrust" created by Western policies.

The West suspects Iran of seeking to build nuclear weapons.

Tehran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes.

'First step'

Analysis



James Reynolds BBC Iran correspondent, Geneva

The air in Geneva is clear. So is the lake. But, for the next two days, everything else negotiators face in this city may be cloudy, muddy, and uncertain. For years, talks about Iran's nuclear programme were marked by detailed public demands and vague private discussions.

Now, following the election of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran, the pattern has been

reversed - public demands are vague and private discussions detailed.

In previous rounds of talks, the world powers made specific, open demands: Iran should stop uranium enrichment to 20%, shut down its enrichment facility at Fordo, and export its stockpiles of 20%-enriched uranium.

Iran refused to consider these demands - and the talks got nowhere. By contrast, the world powers now return to Geneva with one, much vaguer public demand: Iran should stop its nuclear programme from moving forward. Exactly what this means is unclear - deliberately so. It may give the two sides more room to reach an agreement.

In comments broadcast on Iranian TV on Thursday, Mr Zarif repeated Iran's long-standing assertion that to "refrain from seeking nuclear weapons is a policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran".

Ahead of the talks, he met EU foreign policy envoy Catherine Ashton for a working breakfast. Her spokesman described it as a good meeting, while Reuters quoted Mr Zarif as saying an agreement was within reach.

After last month's meeting, international negotiators said they were considering an Iranian proposal, although no details have been released.

The latest round of talks bring together Iranian officials and representatives of the "P5+1" - the permanent members of the UN Security Council (Britain, China, France, Russia and the US) plus Germany - also known as the E3+3.

Ahead of the meetings, a senior US administration official told reporters that Washington wanted Tehran to agree on a "first step" to stop advancing its programme further.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the US was hoping for "an initial understanding that stops Iran's nuclear programme from moving forward and rolls it back for the first time in decades".

Last month, the EU's top foreign policy official, Catherine Ashton, said the the P5+1 and Iran had "their most detailed talks ever".

Last month's talks were the first since Hassan Rouhani - seen as a relative moderate - became Iran's president in August.

Key demands

Iran's potential three-phase plan

- Phase 1 (six-month timeframe): Sanctions to be lifted; re-doubled international inspections
- Phase 2: Details sketchy, but involves confidence-building measures about peaceful nature of Iran's efforts
- Phase 3: End state in which Iran's nuclear programme is certified as peaceful by the international community
- [Could Iran plan defuse standoff?](#)
- [Q&A: Iran nuclear crisis](#)

- [Iran's key nuclear sites](#)

International negotiators want Tehran to take specific steps to prevent it from ever being able to make nuclear weapons.

In return, they promise to lift some of the international sanctions imposed in recent years.

Key international demands include the acceptance by Iran of a comprehensive verification regime - with unannounced checks - and a reduction in Iran's level of uranium enrichment.

Iran subscribed to a fuller inspection regime under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which was known as the additional protocol, until 2006.

Western nations have also been pressing for Tehran to halt the production and stockpiling of uranium enriched to 20% - a step away from achieving a nuclear weapons capability.

They also want Iran to send some of its stockpiles abroad, and shut down the Fordo production site near the city of Qom, where most of the higher-grade enrichment work is done.

Since 2006 the UN Security Council has imposed a series of sanctions - including asset freezes and travel bans - on entities and people involved in Iran's nuclear programme.

Separate US and EU sanctions have targeted Iran's energy and banking sectors, crippling its oil-based economy. Iran wants the sanctions lifted.

16 October 2013 Last updated at 19:27 GMT

Iran nuclear checks most detailed ever - Ashton



EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton: "We talked in much greater detail than we've done before"

World powers and Iran have had "their most detailed talks ever" on Iran's nuclear programme, the EU's top foreign policy official Catherine Ashton says.

The two sides have held two days of discussions in Geneva. Further talks will take place on 7 and 8 November.

Baroness Ashton and Iranian FM Mohammad Javad Zarif called the talks "substantive and forward-looking".

International negotiators were carefully considering an Iranian proposal, [a joint statement](#) said.

The discussions in Geneva brought together Iranian officials and representatives of the "P5+1" - the permanent members of the UN Security Council (Britain, China, France, Russia and the US) plus Germany - also known as the E3+3.

"The participants also agreed that E3+3 and Iranian nuclear, scientific and sanctions experts will convene before the next meeting to address differences and to develop practical steps," the statement went on.

At a news conference afterwards, Mr Zarif said he hoped the talks would lead to the "beginning of a new phase in our relations" and would help resolve "an unnecessary crisis".

He said that he expected international negotiators would need time to "digest and respond to" Iran's proposal.





Iran Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif spoke of the beginning of a new phase in relations

Iran has previously said its proposal at the two-day summit in Geneva has the "capacity to make a breakthrough".

In previous rounds, Iran and the world powers largely talked past one another but now they appear to be getting into actual details, the BBC's James Reynolds reports from Geneva.

One official at the talks suggested that the reticence to make details of the Iranian proposal public was a positive sign - real discussions don't take place in public, our correspondent adds.

White House spokesman Jay Carney said Iran had shown a "level of seriousness and substance that we have not seen before".

Russia's response, however, was more cautious. "There is no reason to break into applause; things could have worked out better," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was quoted as saying by Interfax news agency.

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague welcomed the fact that "diplomats have for the first time begun more substantive discussions with Iran".

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Previous negotiating stances

In April 2013, the P5+1 proposed that Iran should:

- Cease uranium enrichment to 20%, a threshold that could lead to weapons capability
- Ship most of stockpile of 20%-enriched uranium abroad, keeping some for Tehran research reactor
- Accept a comprehensive verification regime
- Address questions about military research activity

Iran responded by demanding P5+1 should:

- Recognise Iran's "right" to enrich uranium
- Ease all UN, US and EU sanctions
- [Q&A: Iran nuclear crisis](#)

"Iran will need to take the necessary first steps on its programme and we are ready to take proportionate steps in return," he added.

The West suspects Tehran of seeking to build nuclear weapons, but Iran says its programme is purely for peaceful purposes.

Spot checks

Earlier, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said snap visits to Iranian nuclear sites could be part of a "last step" of any deal.

Lowering uranium enrichment levels could also be part of a final deal, Mr Araqchi told Iranian media.

The Iranian team at the talks was led by Mr Zarif, although much of the actual negotiating was said to have been delegated to Mr Araqchi.

The talks are the first since Hassan Rouhani - seen as a relative moderate - became Iran's president in August.

International negotiators want Tehran to take specific steps to prevent it from ever being able to make nuclear weapons, the BBC's James Reynolds in Geneva reports.

In return, they promise to lift some of international sanctions which have been imposed in recent years.

Key international demands include the acceptance by Iran of a comprehensive verification regime - with unannounced checks - and a reduction in Iran's level of uranium enrichment.

Iran subscribed to a fuller inspection regime under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which was known as the additional protocol, until 2006.

Mr Zarif said the reintroduction of the additional protocol was not currently being discussed.



The closure of the Fordo facility is one of the demands of Western nations
Sanctions demands

Western nations have demanded that Iran halt the production and stockpiling of uranium enriched to 20% - a step away from achieving a nuclear weapons capability.

They also want Iran to send some of its stockpiles abroad, and shut down the Fordo production site near the city of Qom, where most of the higher-grade enrichment work is done.

Since 2006 the UN Security Council has imposed a series of sanctions - including asset freezes and travel bans - on entities and people involved in Iran's nuclear programme.

Separate US and EU sanctions have targeted Iran's energy and banking sectors, crippling its oil-based economy. Iran wants the sanctions lifted.

Mr Araqchi had earlier insisted there could be no question of Iran relinquishing its stockpiles

of enriched uranium.

"We will not allow even a gram of uranium to go out of the country," he was quoted as saying by Iranian media.

15 October 2013 Last updated at 09:25 GMT

Iran nuclear stand-off: Geneva talks begin



The BBC's James Reynolds explains what might happen over the next two days

World powers have begun their first nuclear negotiations with Iran since Hassan Rouhani became the country's president in August.

Seen as a relative moderate, Mr Rouhani has said he wants a deal on Iran's nuclear programme within six months.

No breakthrough is expected in the initial two days of talks in Geneva, but Iran's foreign minister said he hoped a "roadmap" could be agreed.

The West suspects Iran of seeking a nuclear arms capability.

Tehran denies the claim, saying its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only.

'Resolution path'

Analysis

James Reynolds BBC Iran correspondent, Geneva

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's promise of a new start between his country and the West will be tested here, not far from the banks of Lake Geneva.

Iran's team is led by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. He's an energetic, US-educated diplomat who communicates at length via Facebook and who ended a recent Twitter post with three exclamation marks.

Iranian officials say they will present a roadmap aimed at ending the decade-long dispute over the nature of their country's nuclear programme.

Officials from the group of world powers say they are open to hearing Iran's ideas. They want the Islamic Republic to take specific steps to prevent it from ever being able to make nuclear weapons.

In return, they promise to lift some of the sanctions which have been imposed in recent years.

Iran is holding discussions with representatives of the so-called P5+1 group, made up of Britain, China, France, Russia and the US plus Germany.

EU spokesman Michael Mann said they were taking place in a "positive atmosphere".

He said the P+5 group was looking forward to discussing Iran's latest proposal and expressed "cautious optimism".

The Iranian team is led by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, although much of the actual negotiating is expected to be delegated to his deputy, Abbas Araqchi.

"Tomorrow [Monday] is the start of a difficult and relatively time-consuming way forward," Mr Zarif posted on his Facebook page.

"I am hopeful that by Wednesday we can reach agreement on a roadmap to find a path towards resolution."

These are the first such talks since President Rouhani took office in August, and this has raised hopes that a deal can be reached.

International negotiators say they want Tehran to take specific steps to prevent it from ever being able to make nuclear weapons, the BBC's James Reynolds in Geneva reports.

In return, they promise to lift some of the international sanctions which have been imposed in recent years.

However, the West has hinted that it will be difficult to clinch a deal in just two days of talks.

Previous negotiating stances

In April 2013, the P5+1 proposed that Iran:

- Cease enrichment to 20%
- Ship most of stockpile of 20%-enriched uranium abroad, keeping some for Tehran research reactor
- Accept comprehensive verification regime
- Address questions about military research activity

Iran responded by demanding P5+1:

- Recognise Iran's "right" to enrich uranium
- Ease all UN, US and EU sanctions
- [Q&A: Iran nuclear crisis](#)

"No-one should expect a breakthrough overnight," said a senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Uranium pledge

Western nations have demanded that Iran halt the production and stockpiling of uranium enriched to 20% - a step away from achieving a nuclear weapons capability.

They also want Iran to send some of its stockpiles abroad, and shut down the Fordo production site, near Qom, where most of the higher-grade enrichment work is done.

Since 2006 the UN Security Council has imposed a series of sanctions - including asset freezes and travel bans - on entities and people involved in Iran's nuclear programme.

Separate US and the European Union sanctions have targeted Iran's energy and banking sectors, crippling its oil-based economy.

Tehran wants the sanctions lifted.

Mr Araqchi insisted on Sunday that there could be no question of Iran relinquishing its stockpiles of enriched uranium.

"We will not allow even a gram of uranium to go out of the country," he said, quoted on the website of Iranian state TV.

Israeli warning



Israel's Yuval Steinitz: "What they [Iran] have in mind is far beyond influencing the Gulf of the Middle East"

On Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it would be wrong to ease pressure on Tehran.

Speaking in parliament, he said that any move to let up on the Iranian government would only strengthen its "uncompromising elements", and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "will be perceived as the winner".

In reference to the current international sanctions against Iran, he said it would be "a historical mistake to lift the sanctions, just before they are really effective".

But in the US - which has also shown a tough stance against lifting sanctions on Iran - nine leading senators said they were open to the idea of suspending new sanctions if Tehran took significant steps to slow its nuclear programme.

In a letter to President Barack Obama, the senators emphasised that, in the meantime, the threat of military force should remain.

14 October 2013 Last updated at 16:49 GMT

Iran nuclear: Israel PM warns against easing pressure



Mr Netanyahu wants international powers to keep up the pressure on Iran

It would be a "historic mistake" to ease pressure on Iran over its nuclear programme right now, according to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

Opening parliament's winter session, Mr Netanyahu said Israel must "keep up the pressure" on Iran, "particularly at this moment".

His speech came on the eve of nuclear talks in Geneva between Iran and international negotiators.

Iran's foreign minister said he hoped a "roadmap" could be reached.

"Tomorrow is the start of a difficult and relatively time-consuming way forward," Mohammad Javad Zarif posted on his Facebook page.

"I am hopeful that by Wednesday we can reach agreement on a roadmap to find a path towards resolution."

Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi will represent Iran at the talks, holding discussions with representatives of the P5+1 group, made up of Britain, China, France, Russia and the US plus Germany.

These are the first such talks since Iranian President Hassan Rouhani took office in August.

Mr Rouhani is seen as more moderate than his predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which has raised hopes that a deal can be reached.

Maintaining the pressure

Mr Netanyahu told Israel's parliamentarians - among them some of Iran's fiercest critics - that any move to let up on the Iranian government would only strengthen its "uncompromising elements", and supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "will be perceived as the winner".

In reference to the current international sanctions against Iran, he said it would be "a historical mistake to lift the sanctions, just before they are really effective".



Israel's Minister of Strategic Affairs, Yuval Steinitz: "What they [Iran] have in mind is far beyond influencing the Gulf of the Middle East"

Mr Netanyahu's comments were backed up by intelligence minister Yuval Steinitz, who called on the main powers in the Geneva talks to maintain pressure on Iran.

Mr Steinitz said it was the effect of sanctions, and the subsequent fact the "Iranian economy is in very bad shape", that was driving the Iranians to come to the talks.

"The dilemma will be crystal clear to them - that if they want to save their economy, they need to give up their nuclear project," he said.

But in the US - which has also shown a tough stance against lifting sanctions on Iran - nine leading senators said they were open to the idea of suspending new sanctions if Tehran took significant steps to slow its nuclear programme.

In a letter to President Barack Obama, the senators - both Democrats and Republicans - said the US should consider a plan of "suspension for suspension", in which Iran would suspend its nuclear enrichment programme and Washington would suspend new sanctions.

But the senators - who include the influential Republicans John McCain and Lindsey Graham - emphasised that, in the meantime, the threat of military force should remain, and pressure should be kept up against Iran.

Sanctions and stockpiles

Western nations believe Iran's uranium enrichment programme is covertly meant to achieve a nuclear arms capability.

Tehran denies this, saying it wants only to master nuclear technology to generate electricity and carry out medical research.

Iran has been negotiating with the P5+1 group since 2006, because it wants UN sanctions against it to be lifted.

Western negotiators have demanded that Iran halt the production and stockpiling of uranium enriched to 20% - a step away from achieving a nuclear weapons capability.

They also want Iran to send some of its stockpiles abroad, and shut down the Fordo production site near Qom where most of the higher-grade enrichment work is done.

But Mr Araqchi insisted on Sunday that there could be no question of Iran relinquishing its stockpiles of enriched uranium.

"We will not allow even a gram of uranium to go out of the country," he said, quoted on the website of Iranian state TV.

President Rouhani has said he wants to reach a deal on the nuclear dispute within three to six months.

13 October 2013 Last updated at 21:29 GMT

Iran rejects West's demand to ship out enriched uranium



President Rouhani has promised a new plan on the nuclear dispute this week

Iran will not allow any of its enriched uranium to be shipped abroad, the deputy foreign minister says, rejecting a key demand of Western powers.

Abbas Araqchi was quoted by state media as saying that "shipping the material abroad is our red line".

The comments come ahead of key talks this week in Geneva between Iran and international

negotiators over the nuclear dispute.

The talks will be the first since President Hassan Rouhani took office.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Sunday that the window for diplomacy was "cracking open".

"But I want you to know that our eyes are open, too," he added, addressing a summit of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee by video link from London. "Words must be matched with actions."

'Our red line'

Western negotiators have demanded Iran halt production and stockpiling of uranium enriched to 20% - a step away from achieving a nuclear weapons capability - and send some of its stockpiles abroad.

They have also demanded Iran shut down the Fordo production site near Qom, where most of the higher-grade enrichment work is done.

But Mr Araqchi insisted on Sunday that there could be no question of Iran relinquishing its stockpiles of enriched uranium.

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Iran nuclear row

- **2002:** Nuclear programme made public
- **Nov 2004:** Iran agrees to suspend most uranium enrichment under EU deal
- **June 2005:** Mahmoud Ahmadinejad elected president; deal collapses
- **Feb 2006:** Iran resumes uranium enrichment at Natanz plant
- **2006-2010:** UN ratifies four rounds of sanctions against Iran
- **Nov 2011:** IAEA report says Iran is researching weapons; Iran rejects claims
- **June 2013:** Hassan Rouhani wins presidential election
- **Sept 2013:** US hails "new tone" in Iran's attitude, during UN talks
- [Q&A: Iran sanctions](#)
- [Iran's key nuclear sites](#)

"We will not surrender or suspend uranium enrichment in any situation...We will not allow even a gram of uranium to go out of the country," he said, quoted on the website of Iranian state TV.

He did, however, say Tehran would negotiate the form, amount and levels of uranium enrichment.

His comments seemed to contradict those of Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, who was reported last week as telling several Western news agencies that the country had a surplus of enriched uranium and might use this as a bargaining tool at nuclear talks.

However, Iran's Parliament later denied the claims, saying parts of Mr Larijani's interview with Associated Press were "false and fundamentally inaccurate".

The West suspects Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons but Iran maintains its programme

is entirely peaceful.

Iran, which has been negotiating with the P5+1 group (the UK, China, France, Russia and the US plus Germany) over the nuclear issue since 2006, wants the lifting of UN sanctions.

The sanctions were imposed over concerns that it is seeking to build nuclear weapons clandestinely - an allegation Tehran denies.

President Rouhani, who is seen as a moderate, has said he wants to reach a deal on the nuclear dispute in three to six months and has vowed to send a plan to the two-day talks due to begin on 15 October.

The US has said there will be no major concessions on sanctions until the Iranians take concrete steps to reassure the world they are not seeking nuclear weapons.

9 October 2013 Last updated at 19:42 GMT

Iran parliament denies 'uranium surplus' report



The P5+1 have asked Iran to halt production of uranium enriched to 20%

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- [Challenges for Rouhani](#)
- [Profile: Hassan Rouhani](#)
- [Glasgow student days](#)
- [Can Rouhani break nuclear impasse?](#)

Iran's parliament has denied reports that the country has a surplus of enriched uranium and plans to use this as a bargaining tool at nuclear talks.

The Associated Press attributed the claims to Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, in an interview ahead of high-level talks in Geneva.

But MPs said the claims were "false and fundamentally inaccurate".

The West suspects Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons. Iran says its programme is entirely peaceful.

Mr Larijani was interviewed by several Western news agencies ahead of the meeting with the five permanent UN Security Council members - the US, Russia, China, Britain, France - and Germany.

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Iran nuclear row

- **2002:** Nuclear programme made public
- **Nov 2004:** Iran agrees to suspend most uranium enrichment under EU deal
- **June 2005:** Mahmoud Ahmadinejad elected president; deal collapses
- **Feb 2006:** Iran resumes uranium enrichment at Natanz plant
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- **June 2013:** Hassan Rouhani wins presidential election
- **Sept 2013:** US hails "new tone" in Iran's attitude, during UN talks
- [Q&A: Iran sanctions](#)
- [Iran's key nuclear sites](#)

Iran has been negotiating with the P5+1 over the nuclear issue since 2006.

Mr Larijani said Iran enriched uranium because the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency would not provide it, according to the AP report.

"We have some surplus, you know, the amount that we don't need. But over that we can have some discussions," he was quoted as saying.

However, a statement carried by Iranian news agency ICANA said: "Parts of Dr Larijani's interview with Associated Press, where it had been emphasised that Iran had more enriched uranium than it needed and intended to use that as a winning card in next week's negotiations in Geneva, are false and fundamentally inaccurate."

In an interview with AFP news agency, Mr Larijani described the talks as "a window of opportunity".

The P5+1 have asked Iran to halt production and stockpiling of uranium enriched to 20% - a step away from achieving a nuclear weapons capability.

They also demanded Iran shut down the Fordo underground enrichment facility.

In return, they have offered to ease the sanctions that have severely affected Iran's economy.

New Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has said he wants to reach a deal on the nuclear dispute in three to six months.

But the US has said there will be no major concessions on sanctions until the Iranians take concrete steps to reassure the world they are not seeking nuclear weapons.

6 October 2013 Last updated at 14:46 GMT

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Iran nuclear: FM Zarif wants 'new approach' at talks



Hopes of a resolution to the standoff with the West rose with appointments under the new president

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Iran's foreign minister is urging world powers to come up with new proposals for talks on its nuclear programme, which are set to resume next week.

Mohammed Javad Zarif said the terms offered before Hassan Rouhani was elected president were now "history" and that a "new approach" was needed.

The existing proposals seek curbs on uranium enrichment in Iran.

Mr Rouhani has vowed to bring a plan to substantive nuclear negotiations due to take place on 15 October.

Just over a week ago, he spoke to President Barack Obama by phone in an effort to ease tension over Iran's nuclear ambitions - the first conversation between Iranian and US leaders in more than 30 years.

Iran wants talks to result in a lifting of UN sanctions imposed over concerns that it aims to build nuclear weapons clandestinely - an allegation Tehran denies.

In another development, a senior Iranian official said the authorities are holding four people believed to be involved in sabotage against Iranian nuclear facilities.

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Analysis



Amir Azimi BBC Persian

Ayatollah Khamenei, in a speech on Saturday, gave more weight to supporting President Rouhani's diplomatic manoeuvres in New York, rather than criticising him.

The leader reassured the government of his trust in them but also hinted at disapproval over parts of Mr Rouhani's action.

The tone of the criticism was soft - he didn't condemn what happened, he just said some parts were out of place. Many observers see this as a message directed at the domestic hardliners, who oppose direct talks with US officials.

The message could be that the leader is on top of the situation and monitoring events very closely - and that there is no need for them to be worried.

Illusions

"The previous plan given to Iran belongs to history and they must enter talks with a new point of view," said Mr Zarif, who is both foreign minister and chief nuclear negotiator.

"The players must put away this illusion that they can impose anything on the Iranian people," he told Iranian state TV late on Saturday.

The election of Mr Rouhani in June and appointment of Mr Zarif have raised hopes that Iran's standoff with the West over its nuclear programme can be resolved.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei endorsed Mr Rouhani's overtures to the US on Saturday.

"We support the diplomatic initiative of the government and attach importance to its activities in this trip," he said on his website.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that "some of what happened on the New York trip was not appropriate", without being specific.

"We are pessimistic towards the Americans and do not put any trust in them," he said.

"The American government is untrustworthy, supercilious and unreasonable, and breaks its promises."

Key Iranian nuclear sites

5 October 2013 Last updated at 09:58 GMT

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24410422>

Iran's Khamenei backs Rouhani's New

York talks



President Rouhani (centre) broke new diplomatic ground in New York

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[Iran under Rouhani](#)

- [Ayatollah-approved diplomacy](#)
- [Tweetfest signals thaw](#)
- [US-Iran relations: a brief guide](#)
- [What might nuclear deal look like?](#)

The supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has endorsed overtures to the US made last month by President Hassan Rouhani in New York.

"We support the diplomatic initiative of the government and attach importance to its activities in this trip," he said on his website.

But he added that some of what had occurred "was not appropriate".

Mr Rouhani had spoken to US President Barack Obama by phone in a bid to ease tension over Iran's nuclear programme.

They were the first talks between Iranian and US leaders in more than three decades.

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“Start Quote

Some of what happened on the New York trip was not appropriate”

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

Iran wants the lifting of UN sanctions, which were imposed over concerns that it is seeking to build nuclear weapons clandestinely - an allegation Tehran denies.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the leading advocate of a hard line against Iran over its nuclear programme, has dismissed Mr Rouhani as a "wolf in sheep's clothing".

'No trust'

When Mr Rouhani returned from New York he was greeted at Tehran airport by hardline protesters chanting "Death to America".



BBC World Affairs Editor John Simpson explained Ayatollah Khamenei's hold on power during the election in June

In his comments on Saturday, Ayatollah Khamenei said that "some of what happened on the New York trip was not appropriate", without being specific.

"We are pessimistic towards the Americans and do not put any trust in them," he said.

"The American government is untrustworthy, supercilious and unreasonable, and breaks its promises."

Substantive nuclear negotiations between Iran and international powers are due to take place on 15 October and Mr Rouhani has promised to bring a plan to the meeting.

He said he wanted to reach a deal over the nuclear issue in three to six months.

Iran's key nuclear sites

