

MEDIA RELEASE – 6 December 2005

EU and US policy won't stop Iran acquiring nuclear weapons

Transatlantic experts call for compromise and creative diplomacy to avert 'full-scale crisis'

EU and US policies towards Tehran are unlikely to achieve the objective of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, according to an expert statement published today.

The statement, coordinated by the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) and issued by 50 experts in nuclear security, conflict prevention and Middle East affairs, calls on all sides in this dispute to adopt a more constructive and flexible approach. *"The US and EU have to recognise the limits of their influence and their threats....Diplomacy and creative compromise on all sides are the only acceptable choice,"* they say.

Among those who support this transatlantic initiative are: **Professor Robert Hinde**, chair of British Pugwash and co-author with the late Sir Joseph Rotblat of *"War no more: eliminating conflict in the nuclear age"*; **Hans von Sponeck**, Former UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq; **Jack Mendelsohn**, Adjunct Professor, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University; **Peggy Mason**, former Chair of the UN Expert Study Group on Verification and former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament at the UN; **Dr Vladimir Orlov**, Director of the Centre for Policy Studies in Moscow and a leading Russian authority on non-proliferation issues; **Dr Ali Ansari**, lecturer in Iranian politics and Associate Fellow at Chatham House, **Air Marshall the Lord Garden**, former assistant chief of defence staff and writer on security and foreign policy issues; **Brian Eno**, musician and writer; and **Sir David Hare**, leading British playwright.

It is uncertain whether Tehran is seeking to acquire threshold nuclear weapons capability and experts agree that a nuclear armed Iran would be dangerous and destabilising. However the current EU/US strategy makes rigid demands of Iran without adequate treaty authority, appears discriminatory and is likely to strengthen the Iranian government's resolve to pursue nuclear technology and a weapons capability. Threats to refer Iran to the UN Security Council for punitive action lack credibility and do not have sufficient international support.

Setting out ideas to take the diplomatic process forward, the statement says: *"The current nuclear dispute is not the cause, but a symptom, of a failed relationship."* With best estimates suggesting that Iran is several years and possibly a decade away from any potential nuclear weapon, the signatories make the following suggestions to reinvigorate talks:

To the US and EU:

- accept limited nuclear fuel production by Iran, possibly including the production of low-enriched uranium, under extensive safeguards described in the statement.
- offer Iran a precise and detailed plan of action addressing its economic and security concerns.

To Iran:

- accept continuous, in-country IAEA inspections.
- stop construction of the heavy water reactor at Arak, which is a dangerous potential source of plutonium for nuclear weapons.

- give up all ambitions to reprocess spent nuclear fuel.
- renounce all rights to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran's past concealment of important parts of its nuclear programme and the wholly unacceptable threats towards Israel recently reiterated by President Ahmadinejad fully justifies international concern. However, inflexibility on the part of the EU and US has also damaged prospects of a negotiated settlement.

Stereotyping of Iran and Islamic culture – often picked up by the western media - is also hindering progress. There is no substitute for proper engagement. The half-truths and manufactured fears used to build support against Iraq must not be employed again to demonise Iran.

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