UN Security Council debate on Iran sanctions

10 March 2009

Statement by John Sawers, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

Thank you Mr President and I'd like to join others in thanking Ambassador Takasu for this, his first report to the Council, and express my Delegation's thanks to him and his team for accepting this important responsibility and for the excellent start that they have made in leading the Committee's work.

Mr President,

The United Kingdom continues to have serious concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. The latest IAEA report, which issued last month, makes clear that, in defiance of UN Security Council Resolutions, Iran has refused to suspend all its proliferation sensitive nuclear activities, namely its uranium enrichment and related activities and various heavy water projects. The International Atomic Energy Authority reports that Iran now has more than 5,500 centrifuges installed, of which about 4,000 are actively enriching uranium, for which Iran has no plausible civilian use.

Iran has also refused access to IAEA inspectors to the heavy water reactor at Arak, for the second time in a row. This is of particular concern because the reactor's design at Arak is ideally suited to producing plutonium, which could be used for nuclear weapons. The IAEA report makes clear that Iran's refusal to allow them access has made it difficult to report in any meaningful way on the construction of the reactor, as requested by the Security Council.

The report also repeats previous statements regarding the total absence of cooperation by Iran in connection with issues which give rise to concerns about a possible military dimension to Iran's nuclear programme.

In the light of this, the United Kingdom calls upon Iran to answer the IAEA's questions and implement the transparency measures in the IAEA reports. We further call upon Iran to implement and ratify promptly the Additional Protocol and to implement all measures required by the Agency in order to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

Mr President,

The United Kingdom has made clear many times that we do not deny Iran's rights to civil nuclear power under the Non Proliferation Treaty. In 2008, the Governments of Britain, France, Germany, and China, Russia and the United States - the so-called E3+3 - refreshed their broad-ranging offer of June 2006 to Iran. This offer included help to develop civil nuclear power if Iran suspends enrichment, as well as cooperation in a range of other areas. But Iran has failed to respond substantively to this offer and so far not seriously engaged even on the suggestion of a “freeze-for-freeze” agreement.

We and our partners in the E3+3 continue to pursue a dual-track strategy: sanctions to persuade Iran to change course and dialogue to lead to full negotiations if the Iranians suspend their enrichment-related activities.

Once that has been achieved we will be able to forge a more productive and positive relationship between Iran and the international community.

But if Iran remains determined to isolate itself by ignoring the legally-binding demands of the Security Council, then the international community must remain similarly determined to stand together to maintain pressure on Iran to meet its international obligations, and to make clear to Iran that its choices will have a cost.

Mr President,

The United Kingdom is grateful for the vigilance and cooperation demonstrated by the Republic of Cyprus in acting to prevent the transfer and procurement of arms and related material from Iran on the vessel M/V Monchegorsk. This was a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1747, which requires, as Ambassador Takasu has set out, that Iran shall not supply, sell or transfer from its territory any arms and related materiel, and that all States shall prohibit the procurement of such items from Iran. The transfer and procurement breach these international obligations. The United Kingdom looks forward to the Committee receiving explanations from Iran and Syria as to why the shipment was permitted by Iran as the reported State of origin, and as to the involvement of Syria as the reported State of destination.

Thank you Mr President.