



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 20 January 2012
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Statement by the Spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton on speculation about the possibility of an imminent resumption of talks between the E3/EU+3 and Iran

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"The E3/EU+3 has always been clear about the validity of the dual track approach. In that context, the High Representative on behalf of the E3+3 wrote a letter to Iran on 21 October, which sets out in detail the basis of our continued readiness to engage (see letter below). We are waiting for the Iranian reaction."

P R E S S

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H.E. Dr Saeed Jalili
Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council
Islamic Republic of Iran

Dear Dr Jalili

Thank you for your letter of 6 September, in reply to my letter of 4 July.

I welcome your suggestion to resume talks, in order to take fundamental steps for sustainable co-operation. I am convinced that we need a continuous and long-term process of building confidence and developing co-operation, which will allow us to overcome the existing deficit of confidence in the nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, and bring benefits for all sides.

In this context, I can confirm that our overall goal remains a comprehensive negotiated, long-term solution which restores international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, while respecting Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy consistent with the NPT.

In order to start such a process, our initial objective is to engage in a confidence-building exercise aimed at facilitating a constructive dialogue on the basis of reciprocity and a step-by-step approach. In this regard, we remain committed to the practical and specific suggestions which we have put forward in the past. These confidence building steps should form first elements of a phased approach which would eventually lead to a full settlement between us, involving the full implementation by Iran of UNSC and IAEA Board of Governors' resolutions.

We can achieve a full settlement only by focussing on the key issue, which are the concerns about the nature of your nuclear programme, as reflected in IAEA reports, and by developing practical steps aimed at rebuilding confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of your nuclear programme. Meanwhile, we remain ready to also address other areas of interest to you and to look into ideas you might put forward. However, at this stage, the main focus of our efforts will have to be on rebuilding confidence by developing concrete and practical steps.

When moving to continuation of our talks, it is crucial to look for concrete results and not to repeat the experience of Istanbul. We have to ensure that when we meet again we can make real progress on the nuclear issue so that both sides can draw concrete benefits.

Against that background, if the Iranian side is prepared to engage seriously in meaningful discussions on concrete confidence building steps and demonstrate willingness to address the international community's concerns about the nature of its nuclear programme, without pre-conditions, we would be willing to agree on a next meeting within the coming weeks at a mutually convenient venue.

Sincerely

Catherine Ashton

Catherine Ashton

Copy: H.E. Dr Ali-Akbar Salehi
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Islamic Republic of Iran