

22 January 2011

Statement by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of E3+3 following the talks with Iran in Istanbul, 21 and 22 January 2011

First, the countries I represent and I would like to thank the Turkish authorities and in particular Foreign Minister Davutoglu for their generous hospitality here in Istanbul.

The countries I represent remain united in seeking a swift resolution of the international community's concerns regarding Iran's nuclear programme, on the basis of successive Security Council Resolutions and Resolutions of the IAEA Board of Governors. That remains the central purpose of these talks.

In Geneva, we agreed that at this meeting in Istanbul we would discuss practical ideas and ways of cooperating towards a resolution of our core concerns about the nuclear issue.

We came here with specific practical proposals which would build trust. We put forward detailed ideas including on an updated version of the TRR fuel exchange arrangement and ways to improve transparency through IAEA monitoring measures accepted by the international community. We came without preconditions, and made every effort to secure agreement.

We have had a series of meetings with Iran, including a separate meeting of the Vienna Group countries with Iran.

We had hoped to have a detailed and constructive discussion of those ideas. But it became clear that the Iranian side was not ready for this, unless we agreed to pre-conditions relating to enrichment and sanctions.

Both these pre-conditions are not a way to proceed. On the fuel cycle we have said many times, including today, that we recognise Iran's right to a civil nuclear energy programme. It remains essential that Iran demonstrates that its programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes.

But so far the IAEA has not been able to certify the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's programme, given what the Agency states is a lack of sufficient cooperation by Iran.

As far as the removal of sanctions is concerned, it remains our united position that this would accompany the re-establishment of confidence in the Iranian nuclear programme rather than be a precondition for discussing it. We also note that UNSC Resolution 1929 specifies the requirements for removal of sanctions, and those do not exist today.

This is not the conclusion I had hoped for. We had hoped to embark on a discussion of practical ways forward, and have made every effort to make that happen. I am disappointed to say that this has not been possible. The E3+3 reaffirmed their continued commitment to pursuing a diplomatic solution. We expect Iran to demonstrate a pragmatic attitude and to respond positively to our openness toward dialogue and negotiations. The door remains open, the choice remains in Iran's hands.

I have made personally clear to Dr Jalili that our proposals remain on the table and that we are ready to start talking without preconditions the moment Iran is ready.
