

MEDIA AVAILABILITY WITH SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE; BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY JACK STRAW; CHINESE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER DAI BINGGUO; FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER PHILIPPE DOUSTE-BLAZY; GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER; RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SERGEY LAVROV; AND EUROPEAN UNION HIGH REP. JAVIER SOLANA AFTER THEIR MEETING (AS RELEASED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT)

GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN, GERMANY THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2006

FULL TEXT:

MIN. STEINMEIER: (Through interpreter.) Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to be able to welcome to the Foreign Office in Berlin my colleagues from France, from Russia, from the United States of America and from Great Britain and from China and the High Representative of the European Union.

We had a good and substantive meeting, and you maybe aware of the fact that today's meeting goes back to a successful meeting in this format we had at the end of January this year on the invitation of Jack Straw to London. We not only share the common concern on the ongoing disrespect for the decisions of the Board of Governors of the IAEA, but the agreement that we reached in London was confirmed by us today. You may all be aware of what we said then and you may also be aware of the fact that the presidential declaration passed tonight by the Security Council confirms the position we took in January. This is a clear signal that the international community demands, strongly demands of Iran to take the steps called for by the governing board of the IAEA, the Board of Governors of the IAEA. Thus, the position of the IAEA has been strengthened as have been the decisions taken by the Board of Governors. We all agreed on that a diplomatic solution continues to be the objective of our joint efforts and I would like to point out to you that this is also contained in the presidential statement of the United Nations Security Council.

It is now up for Iran to make a choice. The presidential declaration -- the presidential statement makes it very clear that we expect a decision from Iran within the next 30 days. Now, what choice does Iran have? Iran has to take a choice between isolation brought about through actions of its own and through continuation of enrichment activities on its own soil in violation of the commitments of the international community or a return to the negotiating table. We all very much hope that Iran will seize the opportunity offered to him to resume negotiations and we use this opportunity to once again call upon Iran to suspend all enrichment activities and to choose, or rather open up once again, the path leading towards negotiations.

If Iran were to enter upon the path of cooperation, then it can rely on us entering those negotiations in a constructive spirit. We've made it very clear again that we do not deny the right of Iran to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but what is at stake here is that Iran has to restore the confidence and trust of the international community in the exclusively peaceful character and nature of its nuclear program.

You know, as well as we do, that confidence and trust is not something that can grow overnight. We said that at the end of our meeting in London, end of January. Respective, reliable signals from Iran is now -- is what is called for now. If Iran were not to use and seize this opportunity, but to choose to set out on a path of confrontation by deciding to not comply with the demands of the international community, then Iran will have chosen the path of isolation.

All of us have closely observed, and will continue to do so, in what way Iran responds to the statement by the Security Council yesterday. We do not -- we don't hope that the declaration by the Iranian Ambassador at the IAEA has been the last word uttered on this. And now the final word the response that we expect of Iran is what we're waiting for, but the IAEA Board of Governors will continue to work on the subject matter. We, as will have the Security Council -- as will have the Security Council, we all agreed on that we will stay in close contact and try to coordinate our actions closely.

Thus, we're sending out a signal from today's meeting, a signal of unity of the international community, a signal that was sent out yesterday evening by the Security Council. Thank you.

SEC. RICE: Thank you very much, Frank-Walter. I would just first like to thank Foreign Minister Steinmeier for hosting us here. We did, indeed, have very productive talks and we're very grateful for your efforts to get us together. I think this does send a very strong signal to Iran that the international community is united and expects Iran to adhere to the just demands of the international community that its nuclear activities be demonstrably for civilian purposes and that there are ways that Iran can have a civil nuclear program. That is not the issue. But it has to be a way that gives confidence to the international community that an Iran for 18 years was not truthful with the IAEA is indeed conducting only civil nuclear activities. And there have been a number of offers to Iran, by the EU-3, by Russia, by means to do that, but this is a strong signal to Iran that negotiation, not confrontation, should be their course.

If I may just take the privilege also, Minister, to note the great delight and great relief of the United States, the people of the United States, and I'm sure the people of the world, at the release today of Jill Carroll, the journalist who's been held in captivity in Iraq. This is something that people have across the world worked for and prayed for, and I think we're all very pleased and happy to hear of her release. Thank you.

SEC. STRAW: Well, on Secretary Rice's last point, may I say that we have particular reasons in the United Kingdom for sharing the joy of the United States Government and people at the release of Jill Carroll. We've, thanks not least to great assistance from our American and Iraqi friends, managed to secure the release of Norman Kember and his two Canadian colleagues last week, and these are matters of great relief and joy to all concerned.

I want to underline what Secretary Rice has just said, is that nobody in the international community is trying to deny Iran its right to generate electricity by nuclear energy. That has never been the issue. The issue is whether Iran is also trying to use a huge and extravagant fuel cycle of enrichment and reprocessing of uranium to build a nuclear weapons capability. And given that 18 years of defiance of the international community and a repeated failure to meet the requirements of the Board of Governors of the IAEA, the onus is on Iran to show the international community that its program is entirely for civil purposes and for no other.

We have shown very great patience with Iran. They, in turn, have miscalculated. They thought the international community would be divided on this issue, but truthfully, it has become more and more united. This is a difficult issue. We had long discussions about it. But this matter has now been discussed within the Security Council. We've issued a unanimous presidential statement which has some very clear messages to Iran. I hope Iran heeds those messages because if they fail to do so and as the statement makes clear, the matter will then be considered by the Security Council further. Thank you very much.

MIN. LAVROV: (Through interpreter.) Thank you very much. I would just like to take up the statement of Foreign Minister Steinmeier.

We did reach an agreement and this text is going to be distributed and our agreement will become clear on this. It is quite clear that all of us have very legitimate concerns in the international community with regard to Iran and we wish to reach a peaceful solution. Russia believes that the sole solution for this problem is -- will be based on the work of the IAEA and we will also be demanding full cooperation of Iran with the IAEA. Only then will it be possible for Iran to make peaceful use of nuclear technology. I think that our discussion today was very productive and that we will continue our productive work and continue our common position on this issue. Thank you very much.

MIN. DOUSTE-BLAZY: (Through interpreter.) I would like to thank you as well, Frank, and also mention that the report of Mr. EBaradei shows very clearly that this issue is of fundamental importance. Iran has not fulfilled the requests, the demands of the IAEA, and it must do so. The further point is the manner in which Iran is conducting its nuclear program. Mr. EBaradei, of course, submitted his report to the Security Council and the international community was unanimous. And we've discussed the process that we will undertake over the next 30 days and Iran is the responsible party at this point.

What do we expect? First of all, the complete suspension of nuclear activities in Iran. Nuclear activities, of course, for civil use is possible. We agree on that. But we, first of all, demand that all activities be suspended, including research and development, and that the IAEA evaluate the situation, monitor the activities. These were the demands of the IAEA and we certainly also agree that the Security Council of the United Nations use its political power and to make this demand. And this is, of course, a prerequisite for any resolution to the problem. The procedure is quite clear. We want to have a unanimous approach in the international community and we will continue our efforts with unity and decisiveness. Thank you.

DEPUTY MIN. DAI: (Through interpreter.) -- thank the German Foreign Minister for introducing to you about our exchanges today. I think all the six parties represented here have had very meaningful discussions about the Iranian nuclear issue, which has contributed to greater mutual understanding on all sides. This meeting is also conducive to exerting the important role of the IAEA in the resolution of the nuclear issue in Iran and also conducive to various diplomatic efforts towards the same end. We also hope that this meeting will also help with the peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue.

In the meeting, I shared some of our ideas and thoughts on our work in the next stage. The Chinese side will work together with other parties to continue to work towards appropriate and peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue. This issue is among the most difficult and complicated problems in our today's world. This requires time, persistence, and wisdom. It can only be resolved through peaceful means.

The Chinese side feels that there has already been enough turmoil in the Middle East. We do not want to see new turmoil being introduced to the region because that would not serve the interests of any party and would only be very detrimental to the interests of the people in Middle East. Thank you.

MIN. STEINMEIER: Well, ladies and gentlemen, as we see so many countries represented and parties involved in today's discussion today and we also have to be reminded that everyone has a plane to catch, we only have time for but a few questions.

Javier.

MR. SOLANA: -- it has -- everything has been said and properly said by very intelligent people. The only thing I would like to say, that for a moment imagine how important is the international consensus and imagine that around this table it will be another 20 countries supporting the same principles that have been defended here.

MIN. STEINMEIER: A few questions, as I said, if so desired.

All questions, no answers. (Laughter.)

Q Good afternoon. A few questions, but this is going to be a long one. First of all to Secretary Rice, can you tell us anything about how the release of Jill Carroll came about, whether there were U.S. -- any intercessions on her behalf?

And to the foreign ministers of China and Russia, Secretary Rice has said the purpose of this meeting was to talk about the next steps on Iran and one possibility there might be the kind of political sanctions that the U.S. and the EU have imposed on the leaders of Belarus. Is that something you could support or indeed are there any punitive measures that the Security Council might take down the road that would be palatable to you if Iran does not back down in this 30-day window?

And to Foreign Minister Lavrov specifically, given that yesterday's Security Council statement omits apparently, at your request, language calling Iran a threat to international peace and security, do you think that the regime is not that sort of threat or did you have other reasons for opposing that language?

Thank you.

SEC. RICE: Anne, I don't have anything further for you on Jill Carroll's release. I think there will be plenty of time to look at how this took place and we look forward to simply welcoming her home and I'm certain that her family and her nation very much look forward to that.

If I could just note, I think the conversation that we had was that we would look at next steps. I don't believe I said that I would introduce here the idea of political sanctions of the kind that were imposed on Belarus, so let me be clear that I did not, in fact, introduce any such thing here.

MIN. LAVROV: Indeed this was not introduced and in principle Russia doesn't believe that sanctions could achieve the purposes of settlement of various issues. We believe that there must be a balanced approach of the international community to each and every conflict based on the international law and based on the need to make sure that all members of the international community fulfill their commitments and obligations. And that's how we all tried to work in case of the nuclear program of Iran.

And the key to this is the work of the IAEA, which has been supported yesterday by the Security Council, aimed at clarifying all issues related to the past Iranian nuclear program. The IAEA has reported that it cannot yet testify that there is no military aspect of this program, but at the same time the last report of the IAEA says that it cannot also assert that there is a military aspect to the Iranian nuclear program.

So before we call any situation a threat, we need facts, especially in the region like the Middle East where so many things are happening. We prefer very strongly to base our specific actions on specific facts, and in this particular case the facts could be provided by the IAEA. So far, they have not been provided.

Q I have a question for Mr. Steinmeier and Ms. Rice. If Iran were to fulfill the prerequisites or the demands that are contained in the presidential statement, then what actions would be taken? Did you discuss that today? Would the EU-3 continue or would you have the 6+3 model or the six parties who are present today? Who would be party to these discussions with Iran?

MIN. STEINMEIER: First of all, I would like to state that we are waiting with great expectation and urgency for such a signal. If we do receive a signal that makes negotiations possible, it will of course be possible to reach an agreement concerning the format for the discussions, the negotiations.

SEC. RICE: All that we've discussed is that Iran, should it be willing to suspend, of course negotiations would be possible. But from our point of view, the format for those negotiations, the EU-3 format from which Iran walked out in -- I don't remember, was it -- when did they walk out of the talks? Whenever they walked out of the talks. They walked out on the EU talks and we would expect those to be the ones that resume.

As we have said many times, the United States supports the diplomatic efforts of the EU-3 but we also support the diplomatic efforts of the Russian Federation that have also been taken in the context of the EU discussions. In the summer.

Q Mr. Steinmeier, could you perhaps discuss briefly what would happen if Iran does not send such a signal? Did you discuss this issue today?

MIN. STEINMEIER: At the beginning of my statement I mentioned what -- something that we didn't necessarily expect, weren't able to expect at the beginning of the week. Last night a presidential statement was adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations and now we have a 30-day period of time for further action and further comments can't be made in public at this point. Thank you.

Thank you very much. I was supposed to be in Oslo minutes ago. I ask for your understanding if we conclude the press conference.

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