Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Participating in the JCPoA and ending Iran's destabilising regional behaviour

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Thank you very much indeed Mr President. Thank you for scheduling this debate. And we're very grateful to Secretary Pompeo for taking the time to be here today.

This debate comes at a very important moment. The world is an unpredictable place right now and the developments we're going to discuss today risk making it more so. I'd also like to join others in thanking the Under-Secretary-General and in thanking the Dutch Representative and his team for all the work they have done on 2231.

Today's agenda Mr President, is the implementation of that resolution. That resolution was an endorsement of the JCPoA but throughout the negotiations and at the adoption of the resolution, we were clear that the Council was not only addressing nuclear issues but continuing to impose binding restriction to curb Iran's ballistic missile and proliferation activity because it threatens the region and beyond.

I just want to stress Mr President, the point about the ballistic missile proliferation is not solely about nuclear missiles, notwithstanding that there is a link with nuclear capability. Any conventional payload would cause extensive harm to civilians and infrastructure and Member States in the region Mr President, will naturally be deeply concerned about being confronted by such a threat from Iran. In itself it heightens instability in the region and it heightens the risk of miscalculation. And as Secretary Pompeo said the international community has been trying to curb this activity since at least 2006.

Mr President if I may, I'd like to set out the policy of my government towards Iran. We are motivated by three objectives. Firstly and most critically, to uphold the global non-proliferation regime and prevent Iran achieving a nuclear capability that would threaten the Middle East region and Europe beyond it. Secondly, to constrain Iran's destabilising actions in the region. And thirdly, to encourage Iran to normalise its economic and diplomatic relations with the region and the West and assume its rightful role as a responsible power, constructively engaged.

The United Kingdom participated in negotiations on a nuclear deal with Iran to secure the first of those objectives. And we believe the JCPoA has done so. It remains critical for our national security and we believe for the shared security of our partners and allies. And I agree with

what the French ambassador said on the way forward. We were also clear that the nuclear deal contained elements designed to encourage Iran on a path to normalcy in its trade and diplomatic relations with the outside world.

The Secretary-General's report records Iran continues to comply with its nuclear related obligations and the IAEA confirm this in their report of 12 November. We expect this commitment to continue and we look to Iran to continue to abide by its obligations under the deal in full. So our first objective Mr President continues to be met and for this reason the United Kingdom, together with France and Germany, have been working to ensure that Iran continues to receive the economic benefits from sanctions relief agreed as part of the nuclear deal.

To this end, in September we announced the creation of a European Special Purpose Vehicle to help facilitate this. This work continues and we hope to announce further progress soon.

There remains however much work to do towards the second objective: the ending of Iran's destabilising regional behaviour.

And no one should be in any doubt Mr President about the strength of our concern and the strength of our commitment to tackle that and the fact that compliance with the JCPoA - important as it is – for all the reasons the French Ambassador set out it is not a licence to engage in destabilising behaviour elsewhere, whether or not that has a nuclear link.

Iran cannot, Mr President, expect to improve its relations with the rest of the world or ensure its economic prosperity and security while pursuing its current path. Business will not invest and public finances should be spent at home and not diverted to adventurism abroad. The briefing given by the Under-Secretary-General today has been very clear and the findings in the Secretary-General's report should continue to trouble this Council.

As the report notes, the United Kingdom along with our E3 partners raised our concerns over recent Iranian ballistic missile launches into Syria in a letter on 20 November. Since then as the Security Council discussed on 4 December Iran has test fired a medium range ballistic missile with a capability falling under MTCR Category 1. This latest launch like those referenced in the E3 letter is inconsistent with Security Council Resolution 2231.

Now Mr President, we heard a number of arguments when we met before to discuss this issue in consultations. I'm sure we'll hear many of those arguments again today so I'd like to address them briefly if I may. Some colleagues have made the point that the language in Resolution 2231, OP7 and Annex B Paragraph 3 are not binding. The second plank of that argument is that the Council should therefore not concern itself with Iran's behaviour because we argue it's inconsistent with it.

Mr President, we believe that's an extraordinary but it's also a flawed argument for two reasons. Leaving aside the question of whether the language is legally binding or not, this Council has the power to make recommendations to Member States with a view to resolving any matter that threatens the maintenance of international peace and security. It is clear that these recommendations should be taken seriously by Member States rather than openly flouted. The call upon Iran to comply with the request not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons has a clear purpose and that purpose Mr. President, is to reduce international and regional tension. In defying the Council's clearly expressed view Iran is, to say the least, not contributing to the stability of the region. Rather she is ignoring the expressed wishes of this Council.

Tendentious arguments which seek to diminish the Council's voice on this serve only to undermine the Council's prerogative and authority and to encourage other States to disregard the resolutions of the Security Council. We should all Mr. President be deeply concerned by such irresponsible behaviour.

Another fallacious argument which I'm sure we'll hear today is that the MTCR is irrelevant, that it is only an arms export regime.

Mr President, the MTCR is itself an important part of international efforts against proliferation. MTCR Category 1 which describes a platform capable of delivering first generation nuclear weapon commonly defined as around 500 kilograms minimum to a distance of 300 kilometres. So it matters that Iran test fired a ballistic missile with a capability that falls under MTCR Category 1. These missiles are not harmless tools of self-defence; they are a source of concern and they are included in this resolution because if Iran were to develop a nuclear weapon these missiles would be its delivery vehicle. They therefore not only threaten the region but Europe and potentially others beyond. Testing them is provocative and the Council should respond.

Therefore Mr President, let me say that we demand Iran ceased activity that defies Resolution 2231. We demand that Iran and all Member States fully comply with the resolutions prohibiting the proliferation of missile technology to and from Iran - on which by the way there is no doubt that these are indeed legally binding.

And our second objective, we note with deep regret but also concern that throughout the region Iran continues to play a negative role, supporting non-state actors that undermine the stability of its neighbours.

On Iran and Syria, Iran has been the key supporter of Bashar al-Assad's murderous seven-year campaign. Militias funded and controlled by Iran have been integral to Assad's military campaign to retake opposition-held territory, committing gross abuses of human rights in the

process. Iran has proactively shipped weapons systems into Syria, inflaming tensions with its neighbours as well as violating the provisions of Resolution 2231.

For example Mr President, in just the past week, Israel has had to take action to prevent Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants tunneling under its borders. These Hezbollah activities are a clear violation of Security Council Resolution 1701 and they are further evidence of Iran's destabilizing activity. The United Kingdom condemns the existence of these tunnels. They threaten Israel and Lebanon. The violation of Israeli sovereignty is deeply concerning and moreover, Mr President it takes Iran's destabilising activity literally to new depths.

In Yemen we are watching the ongoing talks in Stockholm carefully and we welcome the attendance of the Houthi delegation. And I accept Mr President, it's important to note that Iran has expressed its strong support for the talks in Sweden. But the situation in Yemen remains of serious concern and the Secretary-General reports today includes information about ballistic missiles fired at Saudi Arabia by the Houthis as well as anti-tank and surface-to-air missiles recovered in Yemen. These weapons have characteristics and components consistent with those known to be manufactured in Iran.

Mr President, I have had in the course of my recent work I have been to Tehran to discuss many of these issues with the Iranian leadership and each time I've been clear that this habit of testing weapons that threaten her neighbours defy the Council by exporting weapons and militias around the regions makes it very difficult to see how Iran can play a constructive role in her region. And it means that she has no legitimacy when complaining when this Council puts such behaviour on its agenda.

Mr President I have long said that Iran has legitimate security interests in the region; we recognise that. But the way Iran goes about pursuing those interests is leading to increasing destabilisation and is simply not legitimate in the modern world. A different approach is available to Iran that concentrates on reintegration into the economic community of the world and into the world of diplomatic engagement. We support Iran in seeking to benefit from economic development. We won't have to fulfil her undoubted potential as a vibrant economy and an important power.

But these are not unconditional goals Mr President; Iran can never achieve these objectives without a vital change in approach on the issues I've mentioned here today. Iran needs to take steps to address the concerns of this Council seriously and to recognise that its expeditionary and expansionist security doctrine will only provoke more challenge and lead to greater instability within the region. This is why Mr President, the United Kingdom together with our European partners will continue to participate in the JCPoA. We will continue to work with everyone to convince Iran to take a radically different approach to the region and help secure for herself a more prosperous future.

Thank you Mr President.

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