European External Action Service (EEAS)

Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Joint Press Conference with Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran

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Thank you very much to you, Javad, to my friends, the Commissioners, the seven Commissioners that have been traveling with me, my colleagues and our respective teams but also to the media that has been so patient and still so numerous in following our works. Thank you very much. I believe that today we moved from the phase where the Minister and myself were reading joint statements on the JCPOA in Farsi and in English, to joint statements on our respective cooperation in different sectors and I think here comes the symbolism of this visit but also what makes it very concrete.

This is my second time for an official visit in Tehran. The first time I was alone, with obviously my team, but not accompanied by seven colleagues and our focus was mainly, just a few days after the agreement was reached in July, on the Iranian nuclear programme and the implementation of the JCPOA. Today, I am here with seven Commissioners covering a very broad spectrum of issues from economy to science, from education to transport, from migration to environment and energy and obviously our political dialogue on the regional and international situation and our focus is mainly on this. We cover a broad spectrum of issues that lay the ground for our renewed bilateral relations. So, we are turning the page. In July, we were saying that diplomacy works; in January, we were saying that diplomacy can deliver with the Implementation Day and today my message to Iran and to the Iranian people would like to be that diplomacy is worthy. We want, as Europeans, Iranian people to have and to see the benefits of this Agreement turning into changes in their everyday lives. We are on the same side on this and here I do not speak on my personal capacity, I am sure I speak on behalf of all my colleagues in the Commission but I dare to say that I speak on behalf on the 500 million Europeans that are supporting our new era in our relations.

We obviously have not finished the work on implementation of the JCPOA. We still have to make sure that the work continues, it is an ongoing task. I take my role as the coordinator of the Joint Commission very seriously because the continuous monitoring of the implementation and also the continuous dialogue on the difficulties we might encounter on

different parts and different sides on the implementation of the agreement is something that is in the interest of all. We have had already two meetings of the Joint Commission, we will have another one coming up very soon and again I, in my capacity as coordinator of the Joint Commission, do the utmost to make sure that this is the case.

Iran has delivered on its side of the deal. The European Union has also delivered on its commitments. We have lifted the nuclear-related economic and financial sanctions, and we come here today to resume constructive dialogue with Iran on many different fields, in very concrete ways and the dialogue that we just had - and the ones that are going to follow in the afternoon and tomorrow -are aiming at concrete results.

Europe and Iran have a very long history of relations, historically, culturally and economically. We have cooperated many times in our histories; long histories in both cases, and some other times we have had difficulties. But we never experienced the challenge of being alien to each other. The channels among our people have always been there.

Obviously today the fact that we are engaging in this constructive relationship does not mean that any difference, any distance, any disagreement has disappeared; but it means that we are willing and committed to discuss and face these issues, all of them, in an open and constructive manner. We aim at a dialogue that is comprehensive in scope, cooperative in the fields where we have mutual interest, and our citizens have mutual interest, a dialogue that can be critical and open in the areas where we know we disagree, looking for common ground, and overall constructive in tone and in practice. So you can call it a "dialogue of the 4 Cs": comprehensive, cooperative, critical if needed, constructive always.

What we are doing today is exactly this: laying the basis for this constructive dialogue on this wide range of areas which, I stress it, can and will make a real difference in the lives of Iranians and Europeans alike. I would like to give you some examples of things that we have agreed upon or we are discussing with my colleagues in these hours.

First on the economic sector. We have agreed to enhance our economic cooperation. We will support the Iranian’s bid to join the WTO, we have agreed to exchange business delegations and to cooperate on financial issues, on tourism, textiles, agriculture. We used to be Iranians' main trade partner and we are determined to take up that position again.

Second, on energy. We agreed to have a dedicated dialogue and closer cooperation on energy as Iranian oil and gas will again be an important part of the European energy mix and improve our energy security in Europe. On the other hand, the European Union has the expertise and technology to help Iran improve its production capacity and its energy efficiency.

Third, in the education field. We believe exchanges between students and researchers and cooperation between Universities would help deliver the full potential of human capital between the European Union and Iran. European programmes on Education and Science are

open to Iranian researchers, students, professors. As we believe we have a lot that we can learn from each other.

Fourth, on migration. We have decided to establish ways to address together the migration flows originating from this region that both affect Iran and the European Union. In particular we can announce today an extra 6.5 million euros to support Iran in particular in the education and health care of the many Afghans who are residing in this country.

Fifth, on environment. We are facing a pressing environmental process, both Europeans and Iranians. We have decided to launch cooperation on environmental issues. This includes also a share of the European expertise in addressing air pollution, water shortages and desertification and waste management.

Sixth, on transport and in particular on aviation. We know very well that the technical assistance that the European Union provides in aviation safety can enable many of Iranian aircrafts to fly back to Europe and we are interested in making the contacts among our people work.

Seventh, as part of this constructive engagement we also agreed to have a very frank and open dialogue on human rights. This is no secret that we have some concerns in this respect. Iran's richness lies in its people and the diversity of the people. Respect for minorities and civil freedoms as enshrined in the Iranian Constitution are important pillars of a healthy society. And we decided to work on that as well.

Finally, but not least at all, we want to make sure that the benefits of the JCPOA will benefit not only the Iranian people, and I have mentioned the areas where we are committed to do so, and further areas will come, but also that this can be translated into benefits for the wider region. Because there is no security, nor development amidst regional disorder. This is true for the Europeans, and this is true also for Iran. So, we have a common interest in working together for the stability of the region, for translating this cooperative, constructive approach to regional dynamics and to work in particular on the priority of putting an end to the war in Syria. When we sit together in the International Syria Support Group, when we work together on some issues - I mentioned the humanitarian aid - it is fundamental for us that the recently agreed cessation of hostilities is respected, that the delivery of humanitarian aid is further facilitated, especially including in besieged areas. And, in particular, we can work on supporting the ongoing intra-Syrian talks in Geneva. We believe that Iran and the European Union can do a lot to facilitate this political process, together and in the framework of the wider support group.

Let me also mention, to conclude, the need to work together on Yemen, as the agreement on a cessation of hostilities starts. We see this as positive development that will be followed, hopefully, by talks in Kuwait on 18 April. We hope that we can work to jointly support this effort.

So, overall, let me conclude by saying that I know that you recently celebrated the New Year, Nowruz. This is, as far as I understand, the time of change, the time when you get rid of the old things and you prepare for welcoming the new things that the New Year brings. And this is a strong symbol for this visit as well. We are ready to embrace this new period in our relationship. Let me finish by stressing that this visit is not only a symbolic one, even if I am sure it is an historic one, because we want this visit to open a new chapter of concrete, substantial work that both, at institutional and people level, can deliver for our people, in Europe and in Iran. And I thank you very much.

Q&A

Q. On the facilities provided by the European Union to solve the banking relation problems between Iran and some countries

A. I thank you very much for the question because this is an issue that is of critical importance for Iran, but also for Europe. As you are seeing with the number of business delegations visiting the country, it is clear that there is a very high interest on the European side, also on the private sector side, to invest and to create partnerships in Iran. And this requires a solid banking basis to be built upon. So it is a European interest, and it is an Iranian interest, to make sure that banks, and I can talk here for European banks, engage, feel confident enough to come to Iran and facilitate and support this new economic engagement that we are opening.

We are doing all we can to reassure our financial and banking system on the fact that all the information on the new situation is provided. We have provided the banking and financial system with full guidelines, a fifty pages guideline, on the new situation after we lifted the nuclear related sanctions. And obviously we are in a situation in Europe where we cannot, for sure, force anyone to do anything, but we can reassure and I hope that this very important media coverage will help me doing so. We can reassure our financial sector and our banking system on the fact that we would welcome very much, on the European side, their engagement in Iran as this would constitute a good basis for our economic cooperation. Obviously, we are reaching out also to our partners in the world to make sure that this is the case also for others, not only the European based.

Q. On missile tests

A. Yes, I did discuss this with the Minister. I will, for sure, discuss this issue also in my following meetings today. I have stated that clearly several times, we do not see the missiles tests as a breach of the JCPOA. This does not mean that we are not concerned, on the contrary. We see this as a worrying step, and exactly because we are convinced that JCPOA opens the way for regional steps towards cooperation, a way of working on a security architecture for the region that Minister and myself, discussed in Munich a few months ago. Any step that could pass different messages in the region, that could escalate tensions is not welcomed from our side. But we do not consider the tests as a breach of the JCPOA. This

does not mean that politically we are not very much concerned about that and we are encouraging to abstain from further steps.

Q. On new sanctions adopted against Iran

A. I am glad to be able to clarify this because, as many of you know very well, the European Union has lifted all the nuclear-related sanctions on the Implementation Day of 16 January. It has always been clear that other kind of sanctions and namely the human rights related sanctions stay in place. So there is no new sanction introduced. It is simply the usual rollover of the already existing sanctions, the ones that we have not lifted because they were not nuclear related. So there is nothing new in this policy, something that were all knew from the very beginning. But I would like to underline all the nuclear related, financial and economic sanctions on Iran have been lifted from the European Union side on 16 January at full.

Q. On human rights

A: On the human rights issue, the European way to human rights, having known ourselves in our history, some difficulties in the way, is double track approach: on one side, we are always firm on principles and our approach to human rights is based on probably the highest standards in the world, even compared to some of our strongest partners. And we will never compromise on that. But the second element of our approach to human rights is always engagement and dialogue. This is the way in which we work on human rights with many interlocutors, friends and partners in the world and this is the way, we believe, in which we can support processes that, for the European themselves, in the past centuries and decades, have been difficult and complicated. So, our principles are firms, our method is always the dialogue. And if I can say one word on the obstacles, the issue we discussed just now on the banking system is among one of those. There are, rather than obstacles, I would say challenges in the implementation. It is true, we are three months after the Implementation Day, three months compared to the twelve years of negotiations is not that long time. But I understand the impatience. And this is why we are working so much together to overcome the challenges. I would not say probably obstacles.

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