

Nuclear deal with Iran

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed on 14 July 2015 concludes the long process of negotiations concerning Iran's nuclear programme. A political understanding by the parties concerned, it aims to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme will be exclusively peaceful, in exchange for termination of restrictive measures against Iran. The deal received a generally positive reaction in Europe and Asia but mixed reception in the US and the region.

Background

The International Atomic Energy Agency referred the issue of Iran's nuclear programme to the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2006. The UN restrictive measures against Iran imposing an embargo on states exporting materials that could be used for Iran's nuclear programme, and placing financial and travel restrictions on individuals connected to its nuclear programme were adopted gradually the same year. Following several years of rather chilly relations between Iran and the E3/EU+3 (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the EU High Representative, China, Russia, and the United States) the discussions about Iran's nuclear programme gained new impetus with the election of Hassan Rouhani as president in June 2013. Building on a series of contacts between Iran and the E3/EU+3, the [Joint Plan of Action](#) was adopted on 24 November 2013. In April 2015, negotiators announced agreement on a set of [parameters](#) which provided the framework for the [JCPOA](#) and its [annexes](#). On 20 July 2015, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted [Conclusions](#) on the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, and expressed support for UNSC [Resolution 2231](#) (2015) endorsing the JCPOA and urging its full implementation. The HR/VP Federica Mogherini paid a visit to Tehran on 28 July to underline the importance of implementation of the agreement for future EU relations with Iran.

What is in the agreement?

The signatories of the agreement envisage that its implementation will allow Iran to move forward with 'an exclusively peaceful, indigenous nuclear programme' and for the rest of the international community to progressively 'gain confidence' in the peaceful nature of Iran's programme. During the 15-year period Iran will only enrich uranium to up to 3.67% (substantially below the 90% threshold required for the production of a nuclear bomb) and will reduce its stockpile of low-enriched uranium from 10 000 kg today to maximum 300 kg in 2030. Iran's research and development and testing capacities for enrichment will also be limited. In addition, Iran agreed that it will not seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons. The deal foresees extensive monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and an inquiry into evidence of past work on nuclear-warhead design. Iran also committed to fully implementing the '[Roadmap](#) for Clarification of Past and Present Outstanding Issues' agreed with the IAEA. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – or her designated representative – will serve as the coordinator of the [Joint Commission](#) established to monitor the implementation of the agreement and resolve related disputes. The deal also includes provisions for reintroduction of sanctions in case of Iran's non-compliance.

What happens next?

The success of the deal depends on its implementation. Sanctions against Iran will be lifted only in case of a positive report by the IAEA that Iran has implemented agreed measures (expected by 15 December). President Barack Obama has [described](#) the deal as 'the strongest non-proliferation agreement ever negotiated' but not all in the US Congress think so. Should the naysayers [prevail](#) in the September vote, a presidential veto will follow. At this moment, it seems the veto will not be overridden. [Israel](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#) have also expressed concerns about Iran's increasing appetite for hegemony in the region, even though analysts see the agreement is an opportunity for more constructive engagement with Iran on some of the most burning security challenges, including in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.