

Question for written answer E-010627/2012
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 117
Rolandas Paksas (EFD)

Subject: VP/HR - EU strategy on the Iranian nuclear issue

In recent years, the US Government, with the full support of the EU, has spread the view that the only way to prevent the Iranian Government from building nuclear bombs is to overwhelm it with sanctions and threaten it with military attack. According to this line of reasoning, other methods are doomed to fail, because Iran has no intention of engaging in serious negotiations and only wishes to buy time to allow its scientists to progress towards the building of the bomb. This view of the matter ignores the Iranian position and downplays any proposed alternative solution. Such proposals have indeed been put forward: two years ago, Iran agreed to a plan by Turkey and Brazil, whereby these countries would receive nuclear material from Iran, which they would enrich within the limitations of civilian use and then return to Iran. But the US administration, after endorsing this proposal, made a shameful U-turn after pressure from the Israeli lobby in Washington. Last year, Russia put forward a plan that imposed restrictions on Iran with regards to enriching uranium, coupled with more probing inspections on the part of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran was willing to discuss this project, but once again nothing came of it because the US priority was to boost international pressure on Tehran in order to approve new sanctions. There is no report of any European stance on this proposal.

This has made it an easy task for Iranian extremists to continue with their suspicious enrichment of uranium, which has now reached 20 %. So from now on, any new diplomatic agreement is forced to include ever more invasive monitoring, with an early warning system placed inside Iran's nuclear establishments. But any agreement that includes this requirement must also include a list of clearly-defined steps that Iran must take in order for the sanctions to be progressively lifted. Over the years, Iran has repeatedly offered to accept a regime of invasive inspections, which go beyond the ones routinely carried out by the UN's atomic energy agency. Former head negotiator Hossein Mousavian suggested an enrichment threshold equal to 5 %, and agreed not to stock any excess enriched uranium on Iranian soil. In exchange, the United States and its allies would have had to acknowledge Iran's right to enrichment technology – a right that is one of the key points of the Non-Proliferation Treaty – and gradually dismantle the sanctions.

Given the arguments above:

1. Is the Vice-President / High Representative willing to build a more active EU strategy on the Iranian nuclear programme, capable of taking into account the willingness of the Iranian Government to negotiate a peaceful solution?
2. Does the Vice-President / High Representative believe that a viable agreement with the Iranian Government over its nuclear programme should include a list of clearly-defined steps that Iran must make in order to obtain a progressive lifting of sanctions?