

IRAN PUTTING OUT HOPEFUL SIGNALS AHEAD OF AMANO MEETING IN TEHRAN, RESUMPTION OF P5+1 TALKS WEDNESDAY

Although today's meeting with IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano in Tehran is still in process as of this writing, Iran has put out very hopeful signals ahead of both this meeting and the resumption on Wednesday of the P5+1 talks in Baghdad. Adding to the atmosphere that a deal could be in the works are some positive words from Amano himself:

Before his arrival in Tehran Amano told reporters, "I really think this is the right time to reach agreement. Nothing is certain but I stay positive." Amano added "good progress" had already been made.

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"We need to keep up the momentum. There has been good progress during the recent round of discussions between Iran and the IAEA," Reuters quoted Amano as saying.

The same Mehr News piece carried upbeat news from the Iranian side as well:

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi had said he hoped an agreement would be reached to devise a "new modality" between Iran and the IAEA during Amano's visit.

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"Iran had previously invited IAEA

Director General Yukiya Amano to make a trip to Iran, but he decided to travel to Tehran and hold talks with our country's officials before the Baghdad talks," Salehi said.

"We regard the visit by the agency's director general as a gesture of goodwill," Salehi stated. "The focus will be on the issue of modality and a new working modality to help clear up the ambiguities and (answer) the agency's questions. And we hope that an agreement will be reached between both sides to devise a new modality."

Fars News has the details on who is taking part in today's meeting:

Amano, accompanied by his chief inspector Herman Nackaerts and number two Rafael Mariano Grossi, was welcomed at the airport by Iran's IAEA envoy, Ali Asqar Soltaniyeh, and a number of other officials.

During his one-day stay, Amano will hold talks with Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Fereidoun Abbassi Davani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Saeed Jalili and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi.

The high levels of the participants on both sides of the talks do suggest that a deal could be imminent, and Fars collected a number of statements from diplomats agreeing:

Diplomats said the fact that the Japanese Amano himself was going raised hopes of a breakthrough.

Another Vienna diplomat said that the surprise announcement was a "hopeful" sign, while a third said they expected Amano to "conclude the negotiations on

the modalities (of cooperation) and to have it formalized in a document.

In a separate article, Fars quoted a senior Iranian legislator who set the stage for how Amano's actions will be depicted if no agreement is made:

"Amano's visit indicates the sensitivity of the diplomacy which has been formed on Iran's nuclear program," member of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh told FNA on Sunday.

He said Amano's reports on Iran's nuclear activities strongly affect the stance of the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany) on the Islamic Republic.

"In these conditions, his visit to Iran can leave positive effects but if he, this time, acts upon his technical and legal obligations, and not based on the particular political tasks defined (by others) for him," Falahatpisheh said, and added that Amano's success in doing so will be in the interest of the agency and its legal standing in international equations and will also help diplomatic efforts to settle the Iran-West nuclear standoff.

By merely referring to "others" controlling Amano, and not using the more incendiary "Zionists" epithet often used when saying that Israel is behind the West's actions against Iran, Falahatpisheh is showing quite a bit of restraint even in describing Iran's response to a potential failure of today's talks.

Meanwhile, Iran is also putting out very hopeful signs ahead of the resumption of the P5+1 talks Wednesday in Baghdad. Over two hundred legislators banded together to issue a statement calling for the West to shift from its

“confrontational” stance:

“We tell the 5+1 group to respect the Iranian nation’s rights, act based on the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which is an established norm, without being influenced by the Zionists’ pressure, and change the policy of confrontation with the Islamic Republic to the policy of interaction,” the statement said.

The statement also said, “The fact is that over the past two decades, the United States and its Western allies, with political ends and despite the Islamic Republic of Iran’s commitment to the NPT and the regulations of the agency (the International Atomic Energy Agency), have imposed an unfair challenge on the Iranian nation, and the Islamic Republic of Iran has defended its interests with self-restraint, wisdom, and national resolve.

“Now, it is the West’s turn to (regain) the confidence of the Iranian nation and put an end to its hostile behavior,” the statement added.

Although “Zionist” language is used here, the overall call for a move toward interaction and away from confrontation is quite positive in tone.

Over at PressTV, Iran has collected statements from P5+1 members Russia and China calling for a peaceful resolution of the talks. From Russia:

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov says the subject of removing anti-Iran sanctions should be addressed in the upcoming talks between Tehran and six major world powers.

“Russia denies the efficiency of sanctions against Iran; it thinks that the sanctions are driving the problem

into an impasse,” Itar-Tass quoted Ryabkov as saying on Sunday.

“Yet, bearing in mind the adherence of Western partners to sanctions, I think they should think about the time when the sanctions may be suspended and lifted,” he added.

And from China:

China has urged all parties involved in the upcoming talks between Iran and six major world powers in Baghdad to make efforts to “build up mutual trust.”

“All the parties concerned should make efforts to seek and expand consensus and appropriately address the disputes to build up mutual trust among the parties step by step,” China’s Assistant Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu said on Monday.

The “step by step” reference is not merely a rhetorical device, it refers to a negotiating framework that the Chinese have been suggesting as a way out of the previous negotiating impasse.

In addition to both Russia and China moving into Wednesday’s talks with an aim toward finding a peaceful way forward, it should be noted that this will also be the first meeting after the new government in France has taken over. Iran views Hollande’s government as potentially much more sympathetic than the Sarkozy government, which it viewed as a primary player in establishing the current sanctions.

It seems that if a peaceful resolution to the dispute between Iran and the West over whether Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons this is the week when major steps in that direction will be revealed.