

71ST SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SIDE EVENT
‘One Year of JCPOA Implementation: Achievements and Prospects for Sustainability’

Co-organized by the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations
and the Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS)

Transcript of the remarks by Anton Khlopkov, Director, Center for Energy and Security Studies
New York City, January 16th, 2017

1.15-1.20 pm.

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the UN General Assembly Side Event ‘One Year of JCPOA Implementation: Achievements and Prospects for Sustainability’. The meeting is co-organized by the Moscow-based Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS) and the Russian Foreign Ministry. My name is Anton Khlopkov, I’m CENESS Director and will chair our session today.

Twelve months ago today, on January 16, 2016, we reached the Implementation Day of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear program. It signaled the beginning of practical efforts to implement the terms of the JCPOA, which was adopted on July 14, 2015, in Vienna by the six international mediators (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), joined by the EU, and Iran.

The goal of the JCPOA is to resolve the differences and concerns over the development of nuclear technologies in Iran. Those differences seemed irreconcilable only a few years ago, and potentially capable of turning what was a diplomatic crisis into a military one. The plan adopted in Vienna paves the way for a comprehensive and final resolution of the crisis over the Iranian nuclear program. Sustainable implementation of the Vienna document should also help to reduce the sources of tension in the Middle East and to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime, which has been facing a whole host of challenges in recent years.

I am sure many in this conference room will agree with me that the JCPOA is a major success story for the nuclear nonproliferation regime, and one of the greatest achievements (if not the greatest) in that area since the late 1980s and early 1990s, when South Africa decided to relinquish its limited nuclear arsenal and join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. We are here today not to celebrate an anniversary of the JCPOA Implementation Day, but to discuss what are the main achievements made in putting the Vienna document into practice in the 12 months, and how to secure sustainable implementation of the JCPOA by all its parties. We plan that our session will take about 90 minutes. After a keynote speech and chair remarks, we’ll have up to 50 minutes for a Q&A and discussion, and then we will have 10 minutes for closing remarks to finish the session around 2.45pm. The meeting is closed to the media.

The adoption of the JCPOA was made possible by the painstaking, patient, and creative multilateral diplomacy backed by the strong political will on the part of the leadership of all the countries involved. The Russian effort during that diplomatic marathon was led since 2008 on a regular – and sometimes round-the-clock basis by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov. Amb. Ryabkov headed the Russian delegation at the talks between the six international mediators and Iran, which culminated in the conclusion of the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) on November 24, 2013, and then the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on July 14,

2015. He is now leading the Russian part of the effort to implement the Vienna document in his capacity of Political Director. Amb. Ryabkov is our keynote speaker today.

Amb. Ryabkov, Сергей Алексеевич, the floor is yours.

1.35-1.45 pm.

Сергей Алексеевич, Deputy Foreign Minister, thank you for your comprehensive and insightful overview of JCPOA implementation, and for sharing your perspective on the future of the Vienna document.

Before opening the discussion, I would like – as a researcher, and a representative of the academic community – to share with distinguished participants four points on the issue of the JCPOA sustainability.

1. One of the key factors that should facilitate a sustainable implementation of the JCPOA is recognition at the highest level, in all the countries involved in this deal, that the JCPOA is in their respective countries' national interests. It is the political support at the highest level – which I have already mentioned in my introductory remarks – that enabled us to identify solutions for the most difficult issues during the talks. Importantly, that support also made it possible to defend the deal itself in the domestic political debate, which was especially fierce in Tehran and Washington. A sustainable implementation of the JCPOA requires such support in all the countries participating in the Vienna agreements, regardless of the phase of the political and election cycle.
2. The domestic political balance in favor of the deal is quite fragile, especially in Iran and the United States. In this context, any attempts at using the JCPOA as leverage for securing concessions on other security issues, unrelated to the Vienna document, would be extremely destabilizing. If this balance shifts, it could trigger an erosion of the arrangements reached so far, and that erosion would be very difficult to reverse.
3. Any differences should be resolved using the instruments established as part of the JCPOA – the Joint Commission first of all. Given the fragility of the balance in favor of the Vienna document, which I have already referred to, any attempts at using other platforms or the media to discuss technical issues arising from the implementation of the JCPOA are more likely to increase the tensions than to facilitate solutions.
4. And the final, fourth, point. The JCPOA reflects the delicate balance of interests between the P5+1 Group and Iran. Like with regard any international, and especially multilateral deal, one may conclude that the JCPOA has some room for improvement. But that is inevitable in the case of a 100+ page document that is the product of a difficult compromise. Any attempts at revising the Vienna document would make it null and void, bringing the whole negotiating process back to square one. In fact, it will be even worse than square one, given the acrimony that will inevitably arise if one of the parties tries to go back on the already approved deal. The chances of a JCPOA 2.0 being negotiated and adopted are marginal at best.

I will stop my remarks here. Before opening the debate, I would like to bring to attention of the distinguished audience that here in this conference room we have copies of a whole series of Center of Energy and Security Studies publications on the issues related to the topics of our

discussion today - from the construction of the first power reactor of the Bushehr NPP and the development of laser enrichment technology in Iran to the early results of the JCPOA implementation. Feel free to pick a copy of these reports when leaving the event.

I am now ready to open the discussion. If you would like to put a question or make a comment, please indicate yourself. If you have a floor, please introduce yourself by name and affiliation. We should go straight to both questions and comments. Only JCPOA-related issues, please. Please forgive the chairman – that is, myself – for any interruptions if we begin to deviate from the topic or use up the time allotment.

2.40-2.45 pm.

As we are about to wrap up, let me also use this opportunity to inform you that this fall, on October 19-21, 2017, the Center for Energy and Security Studies in partnership with the Russian Foreign Ministry will host the 2017 Moscow Nonproliferation Conference. This is a regular event organized averagely every 30 months. The Conference sessions will cover the most critical issues of all the three pillars of the NPT: safe and secure development of nuclear energy, disarmament and nonproliferation. While we are going to finalize the agenda shortly after the First Session of Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference, which take place in May, we plan that the agenda will include sessions on

- addressing the challenges countries embarking on a nuclear energy program face;
- strengthening the IAEA safeguards;
- sustainable implementation of the JCPOA;
- nuclear issues on the Korean peninsula;
- convening the conference on establishing a WMD-free zone in the Middle East;
- the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines of the nuclear-weapon states;
- prospects of NSG membership of non-NPT countries;
- expanding international cooperation to combat WMD terrorism.

We expect that Conference will bring together about 200 experts with diverse background and expertise from about 40 countries. Two thirds of them will represent think-tanks, and the rest are governmental organizations. We also expect that, as usually, the relevant UN departments and agencies will be well-represented. We invite experts, representatives of the research community, and government officials to attend. Please contact me or my CENESS colleague Dmitry Konukhov, who is here with us, for more information.

Having said that, I would like to conclude our session. Thank you for joining us today. It was a very productive discussion. My special thanks go to my colleagues at the CENESS, to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russian Permanent Mission to the UN, UN secretariat, to everyone who made this event possible. Those of you how are interested, please feel free to pick a copy of CENESS reports on the history of Iran nuclear program and the early JCPOA results when leaving the Conference room. Please enjoy the rest of the day.