

China says U.S. must end unilateral Iran sanctions



Beijing, August 17 (RHC)-- China has called on the United States to end its "unilateral" sanctions against Iran and adopt a correct path towards respecting a multilateral 2015 nuclear agreement reached between Tehran and big powers.

Speaking at a regular press conference in Beijing on Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said the U.S. needed to abandon unilateralism as well as unilateral sanctions, adopt a reasonable and realistic attitude, and return to the "right track" of observing the nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and the United Nations Security Council decisions.

In response to a question about Washington's failed attempt on Friday to extend a UN arms embargo on Iran, the spokesperson said most members of the council opposed Washington's wrongdoing, and held the view that the JCPOA and UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorses the nuclear deal, should be "earnestly preserved and implemented."

"The voting result once again shows that unilateralism receives no support and bullying will fail. Any attempt to place one's own interest above the common interest of the international community is a dead end," Zhao added.

The UN Security Council almost unanimously refused on Friday to support a U.S.-sponsored draft resolution on extending the arms embargo against Iran, which is due to expire in October under the JCPOA.

During the 15-member Security Council vote, the U.S. received support only from the Dominican Republic for its anti-Iran resolution, leaving it far short of the minimum nine "yes" votes required for adoption.

Russia and China, both veto-wielding powers and parties to the JCPOA, voted against the draft resolution and the remaining 11 Security Council members, including France, Germany and Britain, abstained.

Elsewhere in his presser, the Chinese spokesperson said Beijing welcomed a proposal by Russian President Vladimir Putin about holding a summit of world leaders to avoid "confrontation" over a U.S. threat to trigger the so-called "snapback" mechanism stipulated in the JCPOA, which would reinstate all UN sanctions on Iran.

"China welcomes Russia's proposal on holding a video summit on the Iranian nuclear issue, and applauds Russia's efforts on de-escalating tensions on this issue and its contribution to regional security," Zhao said.

He emphasized that Beijing firmly endorses the landmark nuclear deal and "stays committed to upholding peace and stability in the Middle East." "We are ready to work with relevant parties to keep close communication and coordination and advance the political settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue," he pointed out.

The remarks come as Trump has said he probably would not participate in any such summit. In a statement on Friday, Putin proposed a video summit with the United States, Britain, France, China, Germany and Iran, saying: "The issue is urgent."

Putin added that the alternative was "only further escalation of tensions, increasing risk of conflict - such a scenario must be avoided."

A day after the U.S. suffered a humiliating defeat at the Security Council, Trump pledged to use the controversial snapback technique, saying: "We'll be doing a snapback. You'll be watching it next week."

"Snapback" was envisioned in the event Iran was proven to be in violation of the JCPOA which Trump unilaterally left in May 2018. The U.S. circulated a six-page memo last Thursday from State Department lawyers, claiming that the United States remained part of the 2015 Security Council Resolution 2231, and still had the right to use the snapback provision.

However, a spokeswoman for EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Sunday that the United States is not a party to the JCPOA anymore and therefore cannot force the reinstatement of UN sanctions on Iran. "We consider that the U.S. is not in a position to resort to mechanisms reserved for JCPOA participants (such as the so-called snapback)," German news agency DPA quoted the EU spokesperson as saying.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif earlier on Sunday denounced the U.S. attempts to invoke the snapback mechanism, saying: "American snapback is illegal and unacceptable and the Americans know they cannot use snapback."



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