

Iranian foreign minister says unilateral bans on anti-pandemic efforts amount to terrorism

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(Photo: Press TV)

Tehran, September 25 (RHC)-- Iran says Washington's unilateral restrictions on its efforts to comprehensively confront the scourge of the new coronavirus are nothing short of “economic and medical terrorism,” urging the country’s Asian partners to stand up to the coercive measures as they unify their resources against the common health threat.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif made the remarks on Thursday, addressing an inter-governmental Asian forum via video-link. “We need to jointly confront the destructive impact of unilateral coercive measures on efforts to combat the pandemic. They are nothing but economic and medical terrorism,” he told the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

"And we must refuse to comply with these unlawful measures in our collective endeavor to tackle this common affliction of humanity," the foreign minister added.

The cooperation, he said, was imperative, because such common challenges had come to similarly affect the health and security of the 27-state forum's entire membership, and necessitated "common solutions that effectively and decisively address the sources of the threats."

First and foremost, the CICA had to be assigned a "pivotal role" to "advance multilateralism" so as to empower the collaboration, reminding again that the COVID-19 pandemic had "defied all geographical, political and socio-economic divisions."

The administration of US President Donald Trump's doctrine has been characterized by singular unilateralism. The approach has seen it withdrawing from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and other world powers, and returning the sanctions that the historical accord had lifted.

Since returning the sanctions, Washington has been trying to bully the rest of the international community into complying with the illegal bans.

The measures have not even been made to exempt vital food items and medicine amid the pandemic that has so far killed more than 980,000 people around the world, including above 25,000 in Iran.

Washington has been ordered by the United Nations' top court to suspend the bans. .It denies that it continues to prevent transfer of the direly-needed commodities to Iran.

Adding to his remarks, Zarif said as part of the collaborative endeavor, the industrialized economies among the CICA's constituents have to extend their hands towards the developing ones by outfitting them with their "medical technology and equipment."

As an ultimate goal, the conference has to ensure full, free and fair access to health services, medicine, and medical equipment for its members, an undertaking that has to enjoy coordination with the United Nations and its World Health Organization, Zarif concluded.

The top diplomat, who is in Moscow on an official visit to discuss issues of mutual interest and regional affairs, meanwhile, told Russian's Sputnik news agency that the US has to make up for the damage that it has done to the Iranian people with its 2018 departure from the JCPOA.

It is only after paying up the compensation that the US could seek its way back to the nuclear agreement, he added. "The return of the United States to the nuclear deal is the first step that they should take. For this return, [the US] must compensate for damage that it caused to the Iranian nation, as well as for measures taken by the US to undermine the nuclear deal and promise to not do it again," Zarif added.

Since leaving the deal, the US has been trying to force its other signatories -- the UK, France, Russia, and China plus Germany -- to follow suit. It also tried in vain during the recent months to prevent expiration of an anti-Iran arms embargo that will run out in October under the deal, and force the UN to return all of its sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Zarif also noted the West's double standard approach concerning the right to peaceful nuclear activities around the world.

"We believe that all of the countries have the right for a peaceful use of the nuclear energy, including [uranium] enrichment, and this right must be exercised in a transparent manner in line with regulations issued by the IAEA (the UN nuclear watchdog)," he said.

"The Western countries have double standards in this regard. If a similar control, which is carried out toward Iran, is introduced on others that want to have an advanced nuclear program, the international community will be in peace," Zarif said.

He was apparently pointing to the general global refusal to take the U.S. to task over its past and present military nuclear activities and atrocities, and a similar negligence towards Israel's nuclear program that has seen it obtaining hundreds of nuclear warheads.

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