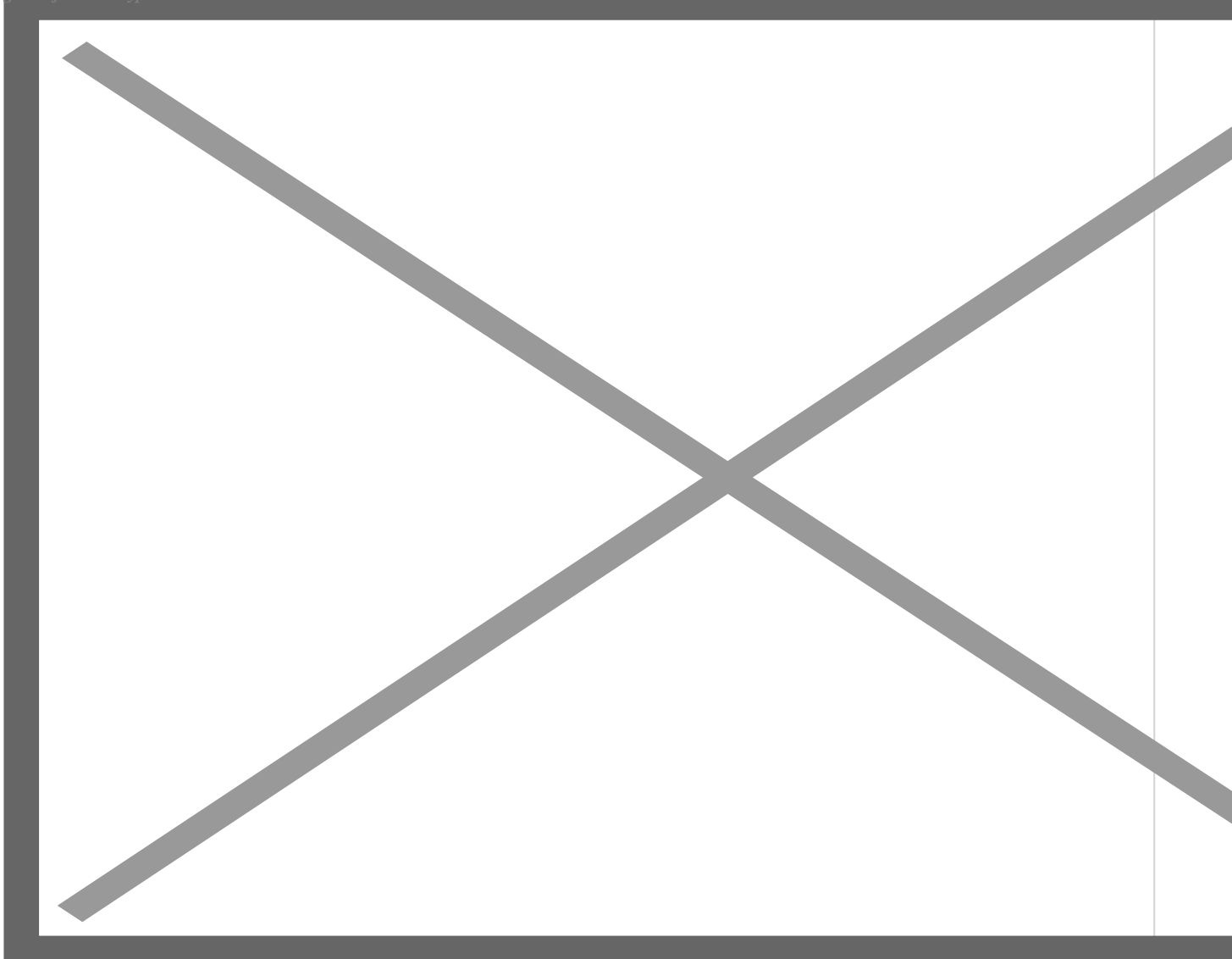


Iranian foreign minister proposes coordinated return to nuclear deal with the United States

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Iranian foreign minister proposes coordinated return to nuclear deal with U.S.

Tehran, February 2 (RHC)-- Iran's foreign minister has said a European Union official could help "synchronise" or "coordinate" efforts by Iran and the United States to return to a 2015 nuclear accord, as a standstill persists over which country will take the first step. In an interview with CNN, Mohammad Javad Zarif said the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), created a joint commission coordinated by the EU's foreign policy chief. "There can be a mechanism to basically either synchronise it or coordinate what can be done," he said.

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has pledged to return to the nuclear pact, which former President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from in 2018 as part of his "maximum pressure" strategy against Tehran.

As part of the deal, signed in 2015, Iran agreed to curb its nuclear programme in exchange for a lifting of international sanctions. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said Washington will return to the Iran nuclear deal provided Tehran gets back into compliance with its terms. Blinken has also said the Biden administration plans to negotiate a "longer and stronger" accord. But Zarif on Monday warned that the US does not have "unlimited" time to return to the deal.

"The United States needs to come back into compliance and Iran will be ready – immediately – to respond," Zarif said. "The timing is not the issue. The issue is whether the United States, whether the new administration, wants to follow the old failed policies of the Trump administration or not."

Political analysts have urged the US to re-engage diplomatically with Iran, saying it is the only way to curb the Iranian nuclear program. Barbara Slavin, director of the Future of Iran Initiative at the Atlantic Council, said in early January that the window of opportunity is short, as Iran will hold presidential elections in June. "Only diplomacy has proven effective in constraining Iran's nuclear activities. It is the only sensible way forward," Slavin wrote at that time.

Another analyst said Zarif's stance might lay the ground for talks on reviving the deal, despite Iran's prior insistence that the United States lift sanctions first. "It is entirely unsurprising to me that we are hearing, amid a largely uncompromising position from the Iranians, occasional breadcrumbs that will enable them" to enter into a negotiation, said Suzanne Maloney of the Brookings Institution.

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