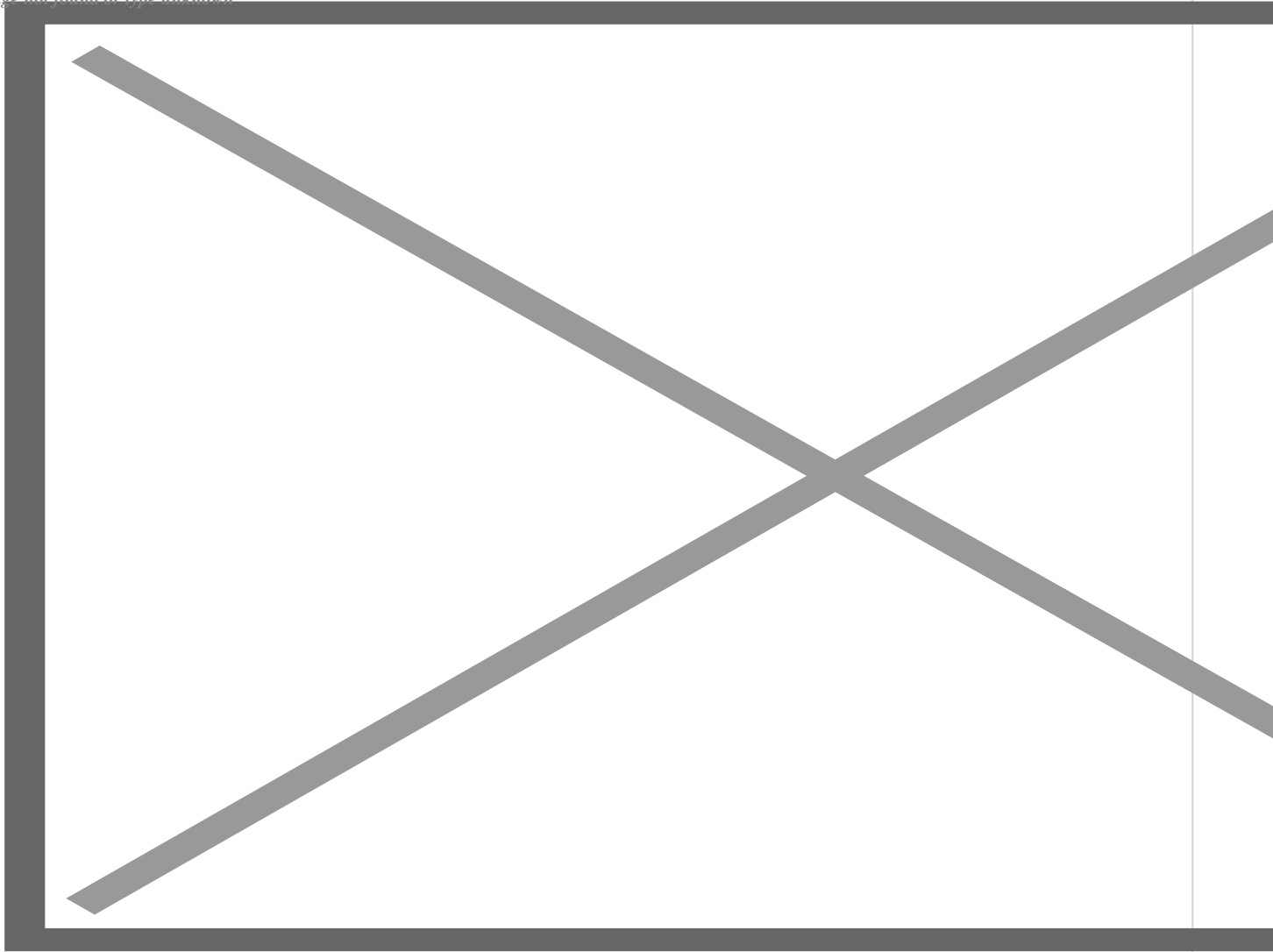


Iranian president says the ball is in the U.S. court to lift sanctions

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Iran's President Hassan Rouhani

Tehran, February 17 (RHC)-- President Hassan Rouhani has once again reiterated Iran's opposition to any renegotiation of a nuclear deal it clinched with major world states in 2015, saying the United States should practically lift its "illegal" sanctions in the first place in order for the agreement to get back on track.

“The ball is in the U.S. court now. When it lifts illegal sanctions in practice, everything will return to the right path,” Rouhani said in a phone call with President of the Swiss Confederation Guy Parmelin on Tuesday.

Rouhani said Iran’s strategy on the nuclear deal — formally named the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — has been “fully transparent, adding if Washington lifts the sanctions in practice, and not only on paper, Tehran will resume the commitments it has suspended within the framework of its legal rights in response to America’s withdrawal from the deal in May 2018.

He added that attempts to settle issues through threats, pressure and bullying against the Iranian people have definitely faced defeat, referring to the so-called maximum pressure campaign that the US launched against Iran after withdrawing from the JCPOA. “The U.S. maximum pressure [campaign] has flatly failed due to the Iranian people’s resistance. Problems can be solved only through methods based on wisdom and mutual respect,” he said.

The Iranian president ruled out the possibility of re-negotiating the JCPOA, which he described as the fruit of a lengthy period of joint efforts involving different countries, saying any renegotiation of the Iran deal would be in breach of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorses the accord.

Following Washington’s exit under ex-president Donald Trump, Iran remained fully compliant with the JCPOA for an entire year waiting for the co-signatories to honor their commitments and offset the impacts of the U.S. withdrawal.

As the remaining European parties failed to fulfill their end of the bargain under US pressure, Iran began in May 2019 to scale back its JCPOA commitments under Articles 26 and 36 of the accord covering Tehran’s legal rights.

Joe Biden, the current president of the United States, censured Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA during his 2020 campaign. He promised to rejoin the accord, which was signed when Biden was vice president, but has failed to take corrective measures since he assumed office on January 20th and has conditioned a return to the deal on Tehran’s resumption of full compliance with the agreement.

Iran, however, says a potential return of the United States could only be meaningful if Washington removed all of the sanctions practically in a way that it would be verifiable by Tehran.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said Iran’s Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) is a step towards encouraging regional countries to promote collective security and welcomed any constructive and operational initiative by countries, including the Switzerland, in this regard.

HOPE is an initiative put forward by Iran in September 2019 with the aim of promoting security in the Persian Gulf region on the back of collective neighborly efforts free from foreign interference.

He added: “Undoubtedly, everyone, whether in the region or Europe, will be harmed in an insecure atmosphere. Iran is ready to take confidence-building measures if it sees the necessary will on the part of other regional states.”

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