

9 March 2014 Last updated at 08:50

Iran tells EU's Ashton nuclear deal possible in months



Baroness Ashton wants to improve ties between the West and Iran

The Iranian foreign minister has told the visiting EU foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, that a nuclear deal could come in the next four months.

Mohammad Javad Zarif held talks lasting more than an hour with Baroness Ashton, who is making her first visit to Tehran amid a thaw in relations.

"We can do it in four or five months and even shorter," Mr Zarif said.

Baroness Ashton cautioned there was "no guarantee" her talks would lead to a comprehensive agreement.

World powers want Iran to scale back its nuclear work to ensure it cannot assemble a nuclear weapon.

The election of Iranian moderate Hassan Rouhani as president last year led to an improvement in ties between the Islamic Republic and the EU.

In November, Baroness Ashton helped broker a deal to curb Iran's nuclear programme in return for limited sanctions relief.

Analysts say the war in Syria is also expected to be discussed, as Iran is a key ally of President Bashar al-Assad.

It is the first visit to Iran by an EU policy chief since 2008.

'No guarantee'

"This interim agreement is really important but not as important as a comprehensive agreement [which is]... difficult, challenging," Baroness Ashton said at a joint news conference with Mr Zarif.

"There is no guarantee that we will succeed."

There was, she added, a need for support from all sides.

The BBC's Lyse Doucet, who is in Tehran, says the visit is primarily aimed at exploring the potential for a new relationship between Iran and Europe.

But it is hoped Baroness Ashton can send a message to Iran's leaders that there is much to gain if they continue to build a new relationship with the international community, she adds.

Last year's interim deal with the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany - saw Iran curb uranium enrichment.

Iranian media say the trip will also take Baroness Ashton to the historical city of Isfahan on Monday.

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Iran nuclear deal framework 'agreed' in Vienna



The talks in Vienna are being chaired by the EU's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton

Iran is reported to have agreed a framework for talks with six world powers in Vienna on a

comprehensive agreement to limit its controversial nuclear programme.

A top Iranian representative was quoted as saying that agreement was reached after two days of talks.

But correspondents say the two sides remain far apart on a final resolution.

Iran is accused by Western countries of trying to develop nuclear weapons, something it denies.

Teheran insists that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only.

Interim deal

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told Iran's IRNA news agency: "The involved parties have agreed on an agenda and a framework and the next round of talks will be in the second half of March in Vienna."

A senior US state department official was earlier quoted by Reuters as describing the second day of talks on Wednesday as "constructive and useful".

Both Iran and the United States have publicly stated it may not be possible to reach a final agreement.



Iran nuclear talks explained - in 60 seconds

Iran's announcement came ahead of the third day of talks between it and representatives of the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany.

The Vienna meeting seeks to build on an interim deal signed in November that saw Iran curb uranium enrichment in return for partial sanctions relief.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that he believed a long-term agreement was possible but it will "take time".

Mr Zarif's remarks came after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say in nuclear matters, was pessimistic about the prospects of a long-term deal.



Last month, Iranian scientists halted all enrichment of uranium to 20% 'Red lines'

The West wants Iran to scale back permanently its sensitive nuclear activities to ensure that it cannot assemble a nuclear weapon. But Iran says its nuclear work will continue and wants an end to the sanctions that have battered its economy.

Iran nuclear deal

- **20 January** - First day of implementation of interim nuclear deal. IAEA begins verifying Iranian compliance; P5+1 and EU suspend sanctions
- **18 February** - Iran and P5+1 begin talks in Vienna to find a "comprehensive solution"
- **19 April** - Completion of dilution of Iran's 20% enriched uranium stockpile in hexafluoride form
- **19 July** - Expiry of six-month interim period for finding comprehensive solution. If not renewed by mutual consent, P5+1 may increase sanctions
- **November** - Iran and P5+1 aim to "conclude negotiating and commence implementing" the second step of any comprehensive solution
- [Iran nuclear deal: Key points](#)
- [Deal keeps Iran's floundering economy afloat](#)

The interim deal, which was struck in November but only took effect on 20 January, gives Iran and the P5+1 six months to negotiate a "comprehensive solution", although it can be extended.

It obliges Iran to: halt production of near-20% enriched uranium, which could be further enriched to weapons-grade relatively quickly; dilute half of its stockpile; commit not to commission or fuel the Arak heavy-water reactor, from where spent fuel plutonium could be extracted; and submit to daily inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In return, the P5+1 has eased sanctions on trade in petrochemicals, precious metals and on the provision of insurance for oil shipments. It has also committed to give Iran access to \$4.2bn of oil revenue frozen in foreign banks at monthly intervals.

The issues for the permanent deal are said to include the level of Iran's ongoing enrichment of uranium; the underground enrichment facility at Fordo; the Arak reactor; and Tehran's willingness to let inspectors visit the Parchin military complex, where the IAEA suspects activities "relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device" were carried out.

Iran has a number of "red lines", including not dismantling any facilities.

Iran agrees to more steps to ease worries over nuclear program

By **Ashley Fantz**, CNN

February 9, 2014 -- Updated 1637 GMT (0037 HKT)



This file picture is from November's deal between world powers and Iran halting parts of its nuclear program.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- IAEA says Iran has agreed to take 7 steps in working with watchdog group
- Iran will allow "managed" access to uranium mines in Ardakan
- The steps could be a positive signal ahead of talks later this month

(CNN) -- Iranian and International Atomic Energy Agency officials jointly said Sunday that Iran has agreed to take seven more steps by May to ease international concern over Tehran's nuclear program.

The move, described on the website of the United Nations watchdog group, could be a sign that there has been genuine progress toward achieving a permanent nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers, including the United States. The parties will start negotiating February 18 in Vienna.

The seven steps that Iran agreed to over the weekend with IAEA officials will be implemented by May 15, 2014, according to the IAEA.

First, Iran will provide "mutually agreed relevant information and managed access" to the Saghand mine in Yazd, which will give an accounting for the mining and refinement of uranium. Second, Iran will provide information and "managed access" to the [Ardakan concentration plant](#). Tehran agreed to show updated design information and oblige the IAEA's safety recommendations for the IR-40 reactor. That's a heavy-water reactor at Arak, which is of concern because it can be used to produce plutonium.

Also, Iran agreed to give information about and allow inspectors to visit Lashkar Ab'ad Laser Centre and provide information on various source material. The IAEA will also get information and explanations to help it assess Iran's desire to develop [Exploding Bridgewire detonators](#), which trigger reactions in explosive materials.

9 February 2014 Last updated at 15:52

Iran to reveal detonator information in deal with UN



Israel and others believe Iran is close to acquiring the components of a nuclear bomb

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Rouhani's Iran

- [Analysis: regional fears](#)
- [Q&A: Nuclear issue](#)
- [Key points of deal](#)
- [Key deal but limited](#)

The Iranian government has promised to provide information on detonators as one of seven steps aimed at allaying fears over its nuclear programme.

It reached agreement after two days of talks with the UN nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, in the Iranian capital Tehran.

All seven promised measures are due to be completed by 15 May.

A BBC correspondent says the detonator promise is potentially significant as it is related to suspicions that Iran researched nuclear weapons technology.

The IAEA is investigating possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear work, a charge which Iran denies.

Its investigation into these suspicions has been deadlocked for years, the BBC's Bethany Bell reports from Vienna, where the IAEA is based.

Saying its nuclear work was purely peaceful, Iran committed itself to co-operate with the IAEA in order to clear up any "ambiguities".

Another confidence-building step is a commitment to provide "managed access" to the Saghand uranium mine in Yazd, which is said to produce some 60 tonnes of yellowcake annually.

The talks in Tehran are separate from Iran's negotiations over its nuclear programme with six world powers, which called on Tehran to allow the IAEA free access to its Parchin military site.

Parchin was not included in the five other confidence-building steps, which are [listed on the website of the IAEA](#) as

- Managed access to the concentration plant near Ardakan
- Submission of an updated design information questionnaire for the IR-40 Reactor near Arak
- Work on agreeing a safeguards approach with the IAEA for the IR-40 Reactor
- A "technical" visit to the laser centre at Lashkar Ab'ad
- Information on nuclear source material, including imports and uranium extracted from phosphates

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UN nuclear chief: Long way to go on Iran nuclear deal



IAEA inspectors were in Natanz on Monday to witness the cutting of connections for uranium enrichment

The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog says the interim deal reached with Iran on its nuclear programme is an important step forward, but that "there is still a long way to go".

Yukiya Amano of the IAEA appealed to member countries for more money to fund increased

inspections in Iran.

The IAEA has been asked to verify that Iran is keeping to the agreement.

The deal offers some relief in the sanctions on Iran in exchange for curbing uranium enrichment.

Iran nuclear deal - timetable

- **20 January** 2014 - First day of implementation of interim nuclear deal. IAEA begins verifying Iranian compliance; P5+1 and EU suspend sanctions
- **January/February** - First meeting of joint commission formed by Iran, P5+1 and EU to monitor implementation and resolve concerns
- **19 April** - Completion of dilution of Iran's 20% enriched uranium stockpile in hexafluoride form
- **19 July** - Expiry of six-month interim period for finding "comprehensive solution". If not renewed by mutual consent, P5+1 may increase sanctions
- **November** - Iran and P5+1 aim to "conclude negotiating and commence implementing" the second step of any comprehensive solution
- [Iran nuclear deal: Key points](#)
- [Nuclear deal keeps Iran's floundering economy afloat](#)

The interim agreement, which came into force on Monday, was reached with the US, Russia, China and European powers in November.

The nuclear deal is designed to prevent Iran from developing atomic weapons. Tehran denies trying to do so, saying its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes.

The agreement followed months of secret talks between Iranian and US officials, and aims to provide breathing space until a more permanent deal can be reached.

Extra workload

Mr Amano, who is director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, was speaking at a meeting of the organisation's governors in Vienna.

The agency has estimated that the extra workload generated under the terms of the deal would cost around 6m euros (\$8.2m; £4.9m).

Mr Amano asked the board to endorse the IAEA "undertaking monitoring and verification in relation to the nuclear related matters set out in the Joint Plan of Action, subject to the availability of funds".

He said: "This will be a further important step towards achieving a comprehensive solution to the Iran nuclear issue.

"But there is still a long way to go."

Iran's nuclear sites



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Iran nuclear: Curbs on uranium enrichment begin, state TV says



The heavy water plant at Arak is one of several Iranian facilities under the international spotlight

Iran has begun curbing uranium enrichment, state TV says, under an agreement which will also trigger an easing of international sanctions.

Centrifuges used for enrichment were disconnected at the Nantaz plant, according to TV.

The move is part of a deal reached with the US, Russia, China and European powers last November.

The UN nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, will now confirm whether Tehran is implementing its side of the agreement.

This should pave the way for partial suspension of EU and US sanctions, allowing Iran to restart petrochemical exports and trade in gold, worth billions of dollars.

'Melting'



Baroness Catherine Ashton: "This is an important day"

"The IAEA inspectors in the Natanz plant are disconnecting cascades," the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, Ali Akbar Salehi, said. "The sanctions iceberg against Iran is melting."

The West accuses Teheran of seeking nuclear weapons, but it denies the claim, saying its programme is solely for peaceful purposes.

Verification by IAEA inspectors that the terms of the deal are being implemented by Teheran is expected to happen by the end of Monday.

That conclusion is then expected to be wired to Brussels, the BBC's Europe correspondent Matthew Price says.

Ministers - including UK Foreign Secretary William Hague - are then expected to lead their EU counterparts in voting unanimously in favour of a partial lifting of the sanctions, which have been in place against Iran since 2006, our correspondent says.

Within an hour or two restrictions on Iran's trade would then be lifted.

Key points of deal

What Iran will do:

- Halt enrichment of uranium above 5% purity
- "Neutralise" its stockpile of near-20%-enriched uranium
- Not install any more centrifuges (the machines used to enrich uranium)

What world powers will do:

- Not impose further nuclear-related sanctions
- Suspend certain sanctions on trade
- Transfer \$4.2bn (£2.6bn) to Iran in instalments from sales of its oil
- [Iran nuclear deal: Key points](#)
- [Iran's key nuclear sites](#)

On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he hoped for "positive results for the country, as well as regional and global peace and security".

[Under the terms of the agreement](#), reached with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany, Iran has agreed to halt enrichment of uranium above 5% purity.

It will "neutralise" its stockpile of near-20%-enriched uranium.

In return, the world powers agreed to suspend certain sanctions on trade in gold and precious metals, Iran's automotive sector, and its petrochemical exports.

Senior US administration officials told the BBC last week that some of the sticking points that had been resolved in the past weeks centred on how often inspectors would be allowed to visit Iran's nuclear sites. Officials said as a result of the deal:

- From Monday, Iran starts diluting its stockpile of 20%-enriched uranium
- All 20%-enriched uranium will be gone within six months
- Daily access will be provided to the Fordo uranium enrichment site near the holy city of Qom
- Monthly inspections will be allowed at the Arak heavy water reactor

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Iran's nuclear sites



In return, US President Barack Obama has said the US and the other five powers over the next six months will begin to implement "modest relief" so long as Iran fulfils its obligations.

"Meanwhile, we will continue to vigorously enforce the broader sanctions regime, and if Iran fails to meet its commitments we will move to increase our sanctions," he said.

The current six-month agreement is designed to provide breathing space while a more permanent deal can be reached.

Sounding a note of caution, former IAEA deputy director Olli Heinonen said that if Iran decided to renege on the deal, [it would only need two to three weeks to produce enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon.](#)

12 January 2014 Last updated at 20:40 GMT

Iran nuclear deal to enter into force on 20 January



US Secretary of State John Kerry said: "We will be extraordinarily vigilant"

An interim agreement to freeze Iran's nuclear programme will enter into force on 20 January, it has been announced.

The deal, agreed in talks with world powers in November, envisages easing of some international sanctions on Tehran.

US President Barack Obama welcomed the news but said more work was needed to strike a long-term deal. He threatened new sanctions if there was a breach.

The West accuses Iran of seeking nuclear weapons, but Tehran has consistently denied that.

The EU's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said the world powers would now ask the United Nations' nuclear watchdog (IAEA) to verify the deal's implementation.

"The foundations for a coherent, robust and smooth implementation of the joint plan of action over the six-month period have been laid," she said.

Under the terms of the deal, Iran has agreed to halt enrichment of uranium above 5% purity, and "neutralise" its stockpile of near-20%-enriched uranium.

In return, the world powers agreed to suspend certain sanctions on trade in gold and precious metals, Iran's automotive sector, and its petrochemical exports.

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Iran's nuclear sites



In his statement, President Obama said: "Beginning 20 January, Iran will for the first time start eliminating its stockpile of higher levels of enriched uranium and dismantling some of the infrastructure that makes such enrichment possible."

In return, he added, over the next six months the US and the other five powers would begin to implement "modest relief" so long as Iran fulfilled its obligations.

"Meanwhile, we will continue to vigorously enforce the broader sanctions regime, and if Iran fails to meet its commitments we will move to increase our sanctions," he said.

And in a warning to his critics in the US Congress, who want to impose additional sanctions, he said he would veto any legislation enacting new sanctions during the negotiations.

Iran's senior nuclear negotiator, Abbas Araqchi, told Iranian TV that under the deal Iran would not limit its work on research and development, but it would halt the increase in facilities.

"For example, no new centrifuges will be added, no new centrifuges will be produced, and no new facilities will be installed at Arak. We will not expand the quantity of our programme, but we will expand the quality," he said.



UN inspectors visited Iran's Arak heavy water production plant last month. He also said that the international negotiators had agreed to transfer \$4.2bn (£2.6bn) of oil revenues in eight stages over six months.

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague welcomed "an important step towards peacefully resolving the Iranian nuclear issue, on which comprehensive negotiations will now start".

US Secretary of State John Kerry said that while implementation of the agreement was a critical, significant step, it was the next phase - of negotiating a comprehensive deal - that posed a "far greater challenge", to guarantee Iran's nuclear programme was peaceful.

"The negotiations will be very difficult but they are the best chance that we have to be able to resolve this critical national security issue peacefully and durably."