

Iran ready to consider Russian proposal on nuclear fuel production

It could be very well worth their while ... it's an international blackmail.

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BRUSSELS, Feb. 20 (Xinhuanet) -- Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said on Monday his country would consider Russia's proposal on uranium enrichment, bringing new hope for progress in the Iranian nuclear issue.

"In the Russian proposal, some main elements should be considered as well as participants to the project, (such as) place or places of enrichment, (and) period of implementation of this project," Mottaki told reporters here in a press conference.

The foreign minister is here for talks with senior European Union officials, including the bloc's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana.

But he insisted that Iran should be allowed to continue its nuclear research and development activities.

He said time and place were the two most important issues around the Russian proposal, adding: "We continue cooperation from where we are now."

He also suggested that other parties must agree to this if there was an deal.

Iran removed the seals of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at its nuclear research sites and resumed nuclear research in January, prompting the European Union (EU) to scrap talks.

In early February, Britain, France and Germany, which had been in talks on behalf of the EU with Tehran for more than two years, successfully pushed through an IAEA resolution to report the issue to the United Nations Security Council.

Under Russia's proposal, which gets the backing of the EU and the United States, Iran's uranium enrichment will be carried out on Russian soil to allay fears that the nuclear program might be intended for the production of nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, reports said an Iranian delegation arrived in Moscow for talks on Russia's offer, in what is seen as a final opportunity for the Islamic regime to avoid the threat of international sanctions.

Uranium enrichment is the key step toward the development of nuclear weapons.

Mottaki also expressed optimism over next month's meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors in Vienna.

The March 6 meeting is being seen as a potentially vital moment in the resolution of the impasse following February's resolution.

Sections of the media say the Security Council is expected to consider taking steps against Iran – including possible sanctions and other punitive measures – after issuing a further IAEA report on the matter at the meeting