



What's In Blue

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Iran (Non-proliferation): Private Meeting

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Tomorrow afternoon (12 March), the Security Council will hold a private meeting on [Iran](#). France, Greece, Panama, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the UK, and the US requested the meeting, [citing](#) Iran's increased production of highly enriched uranium. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari is expected to brief. At the time of writing, Iran and Germany were expected to participate in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Other member states or regional organisations may also participate in the meeting. (Like consultations, the private meeting format is closed to the public, but unlike them, it is considered a formal meeting of the Security Council and allows member states that are not Council members and officials other than the UN Secretariat to participate.)

In its most recent quarterly [reports](#) on Iran's nuclear activities, dated 26 February, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) found that Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to 60 percent purity—near the 90 percent purity level considered weapon-grade—had risen significantly during the reporting period, increasing by approximately 50 percent. The IAEA also found that Iran had increased its enrichment capacity by installing new advanced centrifuges at several of its nuclear facilities. Using stronger language than is typical for these reports, the Agency said that the “significantly increased production and accumulation of high enriched uranium by Iran, the only non-nuclear weapon State to produce such nuclear material, is of serious concern”. An independent [technical assessment](#) of the IAEA's February reports estimated that Iran now has enough 60 percent-enriched uranium to produce seven nuclear weapons if enriched further.

When requesting tomorrow's meeting, it seems that the abovementioned Council members also referenced Iran's “obligation” to provide the IAEA with the information necessary to clarify outstanding safeguards issues. The Agency said that no progress had been achieved during the reporting period in resolving these issues, which include the detection of nuclear material at undeclared sites in the country, the de-certification of IAEA inspectors by Iranian authorities, and the implementation of the March 2023 [joint statement](#) between the IAEA and Iran to re-enable some of the Agency's verification and monitoring activities. (For background and more information, see the [brief](#) on Iran in our December 2024 *Monthly Forecast*.)

Both geopolitical tensions and diplomatic activity concerning Iran's nuclear programme have intensified as the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is set to expire in October. Under that deal, Iran agreed to limit its nuclear activities—which it claims are for peaceful purposes—in exchange for the lifting of UN sanctions against the country. However, after the US withdrew from the agreement and reimposed national sanctions against Iran during the first administration of President Donald Trump—who claimed that the JCPOA was not strict enough—the country began breaching some of the agreement's provisions, including by producing highly enriched uranium beyond mandated limits. The subsequent administration of President Joe Biden eased the enforcement of some US sanctions while it negotiated with Iran and European parties to the JCPOA to restore the deal, but those discussions ultimately failed, and Iran has continued to produce highly enriched uranium.

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About What's In Blue

When the Security Council approaches the final stage of negotiating a draft resolution, the text is printed in blue. [What's In Blue](#) is a series of insights on evolving Security Council actions designed to help interested UN readers keep up with what might soon be “in blue”.

Under Security Council [resolution 2231](#) of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the JCPOA, any party to the agreement may trigger a “snapback” mechanism to reinstate UN sanctions against Iran prior to the agreement’s expiry. In a 6 December 2024 [letter](#) to the Security Council, France, Germany, and the UK—known within the context of the JCPOA as the “E3” countries—reiterated their “determination to use all diplomatic tools to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, including using snapback if necessary”. After returning to office this year, Trump signed an [executive order](#) on 4 February re-imposing a “maximum pressure” policy against Iran, which tightened US sanctions and directed the Permanent Representative of the US to the UN to “work with key allies to complete the snapback of international sanctions and restrictions on Iran”.

Since then, Trump has expressed a preference for a new diplomatic agreement to curb Iran’s nuclear activities but has not ruled out military action. In a 10 February [interview](#), he said that it would require “bombs or a written piece of paper” to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, prompting the Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN to send a [letter](#) dated 11 February to the Security Council condemning the “reckless threat” to use force and warning that “any act of aggression will have severe consequences, for which the US will bear full responsibility”. In a subsequent [interview](#) that aired on 9 March, Trump said that he had sent a letter to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to begin negotiations on a new nuclear agreement but again suggested that he would consider military action if those discussions did not achieve results. According to [media reports](#), Trump has also asked Russia—with which he has sought to [reset US policy](#) and pursue closer relations—to assist in mediating nuclear talks between Iran and the US.

Iran has sent similarly mixed messages in response to the US overtures. In a series of posts on social media, Khamenei appeared to rebuff Trump’s request for negotiations, [writing](#) that “[f]or coercive governments, negotiations are a means to impose new demands. Iran will definitely not fulfill these new demands”. In a 9 March [post](#) on X, however, the Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN appeared to signal that the country is open to limited talks to “address concerns vis-à-vis any potential militarization of Iran’s nuclear program”, while ruling out any discussions about the “dismantlement of Iran’s peaceful nuclear program”. According to [media reports](#), moderate and hardline factions of the Iranian government disagree on whether to engage in negotiations with the US.

Against this backdrop, tomorrow’s meeting—which is not one of the regular biannual briefings on the JCPOA mandated by resolution 2231—may form part of a broader strategy by the US and its allies to increase pressure on Iran to negotiate a new nuclear deal. At its November 2024 quarterly meeting, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a [resolution](#) introduced by the E3 censuring Iran for the country’s “continued failure” to cooperate with the IAEA and requesting the Agency to produce a “comprehensive and updated assessment on...past and present outstanding issues regarding Iran’s nuclear programme”. Some analysts have [suggested](#) that this report could serve as the basis for a referral of Iran’s violations of the JCPOA to the Security Council and build momentum towards triggering the snapback mechanism if a new deal is not reached. In a 14 February [interview](#), IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said that the Agency would submit this report when it has more information to supplement the findings of its regular quarterly reports, which “could be by March, but most likely a bit later”.

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