

## **“The Nuclear Deal with Iran”**

### **Speech by Ambassador Hans-Dieter Lucas on the occasion of the World Jewish Congress Board Meeting, Rome, 27 October 2015**

First of all, I would like to thank you kindly for inviting me to this meeting of the Governing Board of the World Jewish Congress to speak about the Vienna Agreement on the nuclear programme of Iran.

I do so as one who, during the last four years, experienced these negotiations first hand as Germany’s chief negotiator. I am aware that opinion is divided on the nuclear deal with Iran. That is why I would like to explain what my government, and the other governments involved in the talks, consider to be the benefits of the agreement.

What was the core focus of these negotiations – and what wasn’t? From the beginning, we sought to achieve an agreement that for many years would make sure that Iran would not obtain a nuclear weapon. These negotiations were not about the regional role of Iran, its political system, or its highly problematic human rights situation.

Why did we focus on the nuclear issue? Over the past years, we had every cause to doubt that Iran’s nuclear activities were being pursued for exclusively peaceful purposes. Iran’s enrichment-related activities had given rise to suspicions – particularly since some of these efforts were covert, such as at the Fordow enrichment site that was dug deep into a mountain and was discovered only some time after it was built. Furthermore, despite six UN Security Council resolutions and the United States and the European Union imposing unprecedented sanctions, Iran continuously and up until 2013 expanded its nuclear programme in a way that gave true cause for concern.

Only two years ago, that is, prior to the first interim agreement – the Geneva Joint Plan of Action that was concluded in November 2013 – the situation could be described as follows:

- Iran had produced roughly eight tonnes of 20%-enriched uranium,
- Iran had enriched uranium up to 20% in Natanz and in the deeply bunkered facility in Fordow,
- the number of centrifuges was constantly growing,
- construction work was ongoing at the Plutonium reactor in Arak,
- enrichment-related research and development was not limited,
- breakout time – the time needed to produce a first significant quantity for making one nuclear bomb – was about two to three months,
- IAEA inspectors had only limited access to Iranian nuclear installations, and
- Iran did not apply the IAEA Additional Protocol.

That was the deeply concerning state of affairs in 2013, when the E3+3 and the new Iranian government, under the leadership of President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif, agreed to return to the negotiating table. For the first time in many years, and in large part due to the tremendous pressure of economic sanctions, Iran displayed a new willingness to enter into substantial negotiations. The Geneva Joint Plan of Action of 24 November 2013, with which Iran pledged to temporarily restrict its nuclear programme, was an important first step on the path to a definitive solution. The plan gave us time and space for tough negotiations that led to our conclusion of

a framework deal in Lausanne in April 2015 and ultimately would yield the Vienna Agreement of July 14th.

Much was at stake during these final negotiations at Coburg Palace in Vienna, which lasted nearly four weeks. A nuclear-capable Iran with a considerable arsenal of missiles would not only have threatened security in the region, and the security of Israel and Europe; it would likely have triggered a nuclear arms race in the region, with unforeseeable consequences for regional and global stability.

In the short to medium term, the stakes were even higher: If we had not reached an agreement, a dangerous escalation may have rapidly ensued: A breakdown of diplomatic efforts toward an agreement, Iran's return to producing highly-enriched uranium, a tightening of US and EU sanctions, as well as renewed mounting pressure to employ military assets to solve the Iran nuclear problem. All this would have unfolded in a highly dangerous and unstable regional environment.

Given the circumstances, ministers, diplomats and nuclear experts were more than willing to invest many hours, days and months into these negotiations. One must go way back in history – possibly as far as the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles – to find a US Secretary of State who spent some three weeks straight at a negotiation venue, as John Kerry did. The German negotiation team, too, spent 23 days in Vienna.

In our view – to the best of our knowledge and judgement – the tremendous effort has paid off. No one will claim that the Vienna Agreement is ideal. Life teaches us that negotiations will almost never yield such a result. But we believe – and this is the key point – that the Vienna Agreement of 14 July – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – to the greatest extent that is possible through negotiations, for many years will verifiably prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. I will mention only some of the key provisions of the agreement:

- In Vienna, Iran committed itself to producing only low-enriched uranium, with enrichment being limited to the Natanz plant. The low-enriched uranium stockpile will be limited to 300 kg, 300kg instead of 8 tonnes! The remainder will be either neutralized or exported. The underground plant in Fordow will be closely monitored, and it will no longer be used for enrichment.
- Iran will dismantle some two-thirds of its now approximately 20,000 centrifuges, all centrifuges will be placed under IAEA supervision.
- Research and development of new centrifuges will be limited.
- For more than a decade, the country's breakout time will amount to at least one year, so that the international community will have enough time to take adequate measures should Iran breach its commitments. That means: at least one year instead of two to three months.
- The heavy-water reactor at Arak will be redesigned and rebuilt so that it cannot be used to produce any significant quantity of weapons-grade plutonium.
- Iran has committed itself to implementing comprehensive and unprecedented transparency measures. All elements of the agreement will be controlled and verified by the IAEA, which will significantly increase the number of its monitors and observers. Iran will now apply, then ratify, the Plan of Action. The enhanced transparency measures have a duration of up to 25 years. Important: transparency measures also include military sites.

In return for these extensive nuclear limitations and transparency measures, the E3+3 agreed to a lifting of United Nations sanctions, as well as of many US and EU bilateral sanctions. The lifting of sanctions was the chief objective of the Iranian side in these negotiations – and without sanctions as a bargaining chip, we would not have been able to achieve this far-reaching agreement.

I will not go into further details of the highly-complex deal. Let me just say that it will probably figure prominently in the history of diplomacy – not least since the intertwining issues being dealt with were both extremely technical and highly political. It is all the more remarkable that agreement could even be reached on the JCPOA and its very complex annexes, as well as on the wording of a UN Security Council resolution.

The JCPOA just recently went into effect, on 18 October. It is now up to Iran to deliver over the coming months. Only once Iran has fully and credibly met its obligations, and after this has been verified by the IAEA, can sanctions begin to be lifted, one step at a time. This will presumably be in early 2016. There will be no arbitrary leap of faith with respect to Iran (in recent years, Iran did nothing, or next to nothing, to earn our trust). Trust will only be established through successful implementation. That is why, right now, the focus is on comprehensive control and verification. Be assured that not only the IAEA, but also the E3+3, including my government, will closely watch Iran's performance on implementation. And – as in the past – Germany will stay in close contact with the Government of Israel on these questions. It is at least encouraging to note that Iran has fully complied with its obligations under the Geneva Joint Plan of Action of November 2013. Iran is very much aware that any violation of its JCPOA commitments would lead to a "snap-back" of sanctions. Both the Vienna Agreement and the UN Security Council resolution contain a mechanism for this that cannot be vetoed by permanent Security Council members. This was an important unprecedented concession not only by Iran, but also by Russia and China. Both could in the end also be convinced to agree to extension of the embargoes on weapons and missiles by five and eight years, respectively. In addition, nuclear-related restrictions remain in place.

I am convinced that, if the Vienna Agreement is implemented, there will be a spillover effect beyond the Iranian nuclear programme. The agreement strengthens both the regime of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the position of the IAEA. The fact that, with this agreement, Iran has for many years relinquished the option of building a nuclear weapon reduces the incentive for other regional powers to obtain their own nuclear weapon option. That is why the withdrawal of initial strong reservations by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries sent an important signal.

In conclusion, I would like to make one point that I believe is very important: During the talks, the German delegation under Foreign Minister Steinmeier was constantly and particularly aware that these negotiations were not least about the security of Israel. This made us all the more intent on reaching an agreement that would most assuredly block all of Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon.

Clearly, despite the nuclear deal, there are still many open questions about Iran. These pertain above all to Iran's problematic role in the region, and to its relationship with the State of Israel. We all know the completely unacceptable anti-Israel statements made by representatives of the Iranian leadership. We are fully aware of this, and Foreign Minister Steinmeier during his visit to Tehran last week candidly addressed all of these critical issues. This includes Iranian support for the Assad

regime, and its support of Hezbollah and Hamas. Israel's right to exist is non-negotiable in our view.

We also know the argument that the lifting of sanctions will strengthen Iran's economy and thereby put it in a better position to exercise regional hegemony. I do not believe this is a compelling argument with respect to the nuclear deal. If the extensive lifting of sanctions had not been on the table, then it would not have been possible to convince Iran to massively restrict its nuclear capabilities, as the Vienna Agreement does. Let me repeat: If we had not seized the opportunity of Vienna, developments would most likely have spun out of control, and this may have led to a large military conflict with completely unforeseeable consequences – also for Israel. The ultimate outcome would probably have been an Iranian nuclear bomb. None of the E3+3 members were willing to accept failure of the negotiations and the great associated risks.

In Vienna, we had to make a choice – and we chose the option that, in our best human judgement, would most certainly prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon. That may be less than some wanted, and still want – but it was what we, to the best of our knowledge and judgement, believed was achievable. No more – but also no less.

Thank you, and now I look forward to our discussion.