

To H.E. Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the Union
for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Rue de la Loi 175
B – 1048 Brussels

Subject: Iran

Brussels, 24 June 2012

Your Excellency,
Dear High Commissioner Catherine Ashton,

Pax Christi International welcomes the resumption of talks between Iran and China, France, Germany, Russia, the US and the UK and encourages on-going diplomatic efforts to resolve outstanding questions about Iran's nuclear programmes. Furthermore, Pax Christi International firmly rejects the possibility of military action and calls for a process of normalization of relations with Iran.

To follow-through on the meeting between Iran and the six governments held in Moscow on 18 - 19 June 2012, certain steps could be taken to demonstrate continuing good faith and confidence in the diplomatic process. In this regard, the European Union and the United States should postpone the implementation of harsher sanctions on oil exports and banking transactions, currently scheduled to go into effect on 1 July 2012. At the same time, Iran should increase transparency, by providing the IAEA with access to of all relevant information, documentation, sites, material and personnel in Iran, including outstanding questions on the locations of new enrichment facilities, laser enrichment technology and the Parchin site. Providing the IAEA with access to questionable facilities is the best way to clarify whether or not allegations of possible military dimension of Iran's nuclear programme are unfounded.

The IAEA Board of Governors meeting on 5 March 2012 was informed by the Secretariat that there is no conclusive and convincing proof that Iran is developing nuclear weapons. However, at the 6 June 2012 meeting, it was reiterated that the IAEA is "unable to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran."¹

Additional investigation is necessary and a process for this is being negotiated between the IAEA and Iran. To support this, the European External Action Service and the EU High Representative in particular should recommend that a process be established to progressively lift sanctions in return for IAEA access to questionable sites, with the goal of the full lifting of sanctions in exchange for the ratification and full implementation of the Additional Protocol.

Negotiating partners should recognise that enriching uranium, while having potentially negative environmental consequences, is legal and permitted by the NPT. To address

¹ <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2012/gov2012-23.pdf>

concerns about potential overproduction by Iran of uranium enriched to 20%, a negotiated outcome could include the creation of a regional fuel bank. The goal cannot be an end to legal and transparent uranium enrichment. The goal must be increased Iranian transparency and the verification of non-diversion for military purposes by the IAEA. To reiterate, progressively increasing transparency and providing access to any questionable sites should result in the progressive lifting of sanctions.

In the long term, the best hope for guaranteeing that no state develops nuclear weapons is to make such weapons illegal for all states. The European Parliament recognised this in a 2009 resolution that “*commit[ed] to the aim of eventual total nuclear disarmament, as contained in the proposal for a Nuclear Weapons Convention;*”² and connected it to the Middle East with the 10 March 2010 resolution that, inter alia “*calls for the establishment of nuclear-free zones as a positive step towards a nuclear-free world; takes the view, in this regard, that a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East is of fundamental importance for the achievement of lasting and comprehensive peace in the region; points out that the withdrawal of all tactical warheads in Europe could, in the meantime, set a precedent for further nuclear disarmament;*”³.

To this end, the six states negotiating with Iran, all of whom have nuclear weapons stationed on their territories, should seek to act in their own territories to demonstrate their commitment to a nuclear weapons-free world by reducing the reliance on nuclear weapons in their national security strategies. This would increase their legitimacy in calling for greater Iranian transparency and renunciation of any suspected nuclear weapons programmes and continue implementation of their legal obligation under Article VI of the NPT.

The European Union should strongly support the forthcoming international conference in Helsinki, December 2012, in advancing the creation of a (Nuclear) Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East and make sure of the participation of countries such as Iran, Israel, Pakistan and India.

Pax Christi International reaffirms its commitment to seeking a better world free from the dark threat of nuclear war and weapons of mass destruction, and urges the IAEA, the Security Council and the EU to persist in fair and productive negotiations with Iran on the basis of mutual respect and dignity.

Yours sincerely,

Marie Dennis and Bishop Kevin Dowling
Co-Presidents of Pax Christi International

2012-0241-en-me-SD

² <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2009-0333&format=XML&language=EN>

³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2010-0062+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>