

Iran Ready to Talk, But No Preconditions

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Iran's ambassador to Russia said Thursday that Tehran would accept "no preliminary conditions" for the potential start of new talks with six global powers over the country's nuclear program.

"I think that both sides know that there should be no preliminary conditions for these talks at all," Seyed Mahmoud-Reza Sajjadi said at a news conference in Moscow.

Iran, facing harsher sanctions targeting its economically vital oil exports, has told world powers that it wants to resume long-frozen talks soon but left vague whether it is ready to address concerns about its nuclear activity, as they insist.

Russia said a day earlier that global powers must work harder to win concessions from Iran over its nuclear program.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said UN sanctions and additional measures introduced by Western nations had produced "zero" effect.

"The alternative is the introduction of a serious negotiations process with the Iranian side,"

he said in an interview posted on the ministry's website Wednesday.

Talks must be aimed at "a search for compromises and the proposal of a solution scheme that could interest the Iranian side," said Ryabkov, Moscow's point man for Iran diplomacy.

His remarks were posted hours after Iranian state TV reported that Iran had handed a letter to the European Union over its readiness to resume talks with six global powers to discuss its nuclear program.

Russia is concerned about Iran's progress and cannot accept a nuclear-armed Iran but sees no "hard, unequivocal evidence" of military aims in its nuclear program.

"We have no smoking gun confirming the presence of a military component and a military aspect of the Iranian nuclear program," Ryabkov said in the interview with the journal Security Index.

Talks between Iran on one side and the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany on the other broke off a year ago with no sign of progress.

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