

Foreign Ministry Says It Is Seeking Agreement on Nuclear Talks With Iran

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A Foreign Ministry official said Russia is working hard to firm up plans for a new round of talks between global powers and Iran over Tehran's nuclear program, which the West suspects is aimed at developing nuclear weapons capability.

Iranian news agency ISNA said Wednesday that Iran and six world powers would resume talks in late January, but a European Union official said the two sides had yet to agree on a date. No venue has been set for the talks, either.

"Russia is concerned about this, and we continue to work, including with our Iranian partners, to resolve this issue as soon as possible," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said in comments carried by state-run news agency Itar-Tass.

Ryabkov, Russia's negotiator at previous rounds of talks that brought no breakthrough, said that until there is a final agreement, "there is no agreement."

Russia built Iran's first nuclear power plant and has warmer ties with Tehran than the United States and other Western nations do, giving it potential levers to pressure Iran.

But Ryabkov said arranging a date and venue was ultimately up to the office of EU policy chief Catherine Ashton, who oversees contacts with Iran over its nuclear program on behalf of the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany.

A spokesman for Ashton said in Brussels on Wednesday that no date had yet been set.

"Contacts are still ongoing. We are waiting for the Iranians to respond," Michael Mann said when asked about the ISNA report.

Western and Russian diplomats had hoped for talks to restart in December or mid-January. Since the last meeting in June, Iran has pressed ahead with disputed nuclear activity and amassed more material that can have both civilian and military purposes.

Russia approved four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, but it opposes new UN sanctions and has sharply criticized separate Western sanctions, saying they are counterproductive.

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