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Remarks by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on Nonproliferation, at the Security Council Stakeout, September 27, 2008

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, good afternoon. I hope we haven't done too much damage to your weekend.

I'm very pleased with the vote that just took place - unanimous vote by the Security Council on the issue of Iranian compliance with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the Iranian cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Council unanimous, as you saw, has restated its call for Iran to comply with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency. It shows that the world community - the international community is united on this issue that Iran must cooperate. It shows that the world regards this issue to be important.

And so, while we all agree, and I have stated that repeatedly, that there is no issue with regard to having access to a civilian nuclear program, nuclear electricity, that we are willing - we have stated that repeatedly, to work with Iran to find a solution to the issue of security of supply of nuclear fuel. But it is unacceptable for Iran to defy the Security Council resolutions that it must suspend its enrichment program, its reprocessing program, its work on heavy water, and to cooperate with IAEA to answer questions that remain with regard to its program.

The resolution states - and it has been the U.S. position that we want to see this issue resolved diplomatically; that's the best way to deal with this issue. And we remain in the phase of diplomacy on this issue.

Thank you.

Reporter: Ambassador, if this is your position and you have preferred a diplomatic way to solving this problem, how about the countries who are threatening to attack nuclear reactors or nuclear facilities in Iran? What's your message to them?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, as I said before, it is the position of the United States that this problem should be resolved through diplomacy; that we are, at this point, following a two-track approach: sanctions - U.N. resolutions and negotiations. And the package that has been put forward to Iran, and we still have not received an authoritative answer from the leadership in Iran. And that's where we remain at this point.

Reporter: Ambassador, in his speech to the General Assembly a short time ago, Russian Minister Lavrov said that the illegal U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a bid for a unipolar world that confused

some leaders around the world, believing they had a carte blanche to act in any way they wanted, and this resulted in Georgia's attack on South Ossetia and the war.

What's the U.S. reaction to that premise?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, of course, we disagree with that view. It would not come as a surprise to you or to the Russians that the attack on Georgia, in our view, was disproportionate, and we have condemned it in very strong terms.

But, at the same time we saw today, while we disagree with Russia on this issue in a fundamental way on the issue of Georgia, we want to work on issues of mutual interest, such as the Iranian nuclear program. This indicates that Russia continues to see Iran's noncompliance as a problem and wants to work with others, including the United States, to find a diplomatic solution to the problem.

Reporter: Mr. Ambassador, the last resolution the Council passed against Iran was in March. And if you were going to go according to what was mentioned in the Council, there should have been new sanctions by now against Iran. Don't you think that this weakens this present resolution, sir, that there is no sanctions in [inaudible]?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, this resolution is an [inaudible] in terms of lack of adequate cooperation. And we could not remain silent and let a lot of time pass.

And too, of course, the point that you're all aware of -that there has been a very serious disagreement between us and Russia in the aftermath of Georgia. And there has been some who have thought that this disagreement could affect cooperation on other issues such as Iran.

And I think this resolution does deal with the issue of the IAEA, in their report, immediately. And also reaffirms that Russia and others - Security Council unanimously remains focused on this issue, calls on Iran to comply and remains seized (of?) the problem, meaning that we can and will come back if Iran does not comply.

Reporter: How is the U.S. going to vote on this resolution by Serbia to send -in the matter of Kosovo, to the International Criminal Court of Justice?

Ambassador Khalilzad: I don't have anything for you on that at this point.

Thank you very much.

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