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Remarks With Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Moscow, Russia

October 15, 2005

FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV: (*Via interpreter.*) Good afternoon. I was very pleased to welcome Madame Rice in Moscow. We had a discussion on quite specific issues concerning the Iranian nuclear program and we have a common position, common understanding, that we should do everything possible in order to preserve the nonproliferation regime. And we also discussed the situation in the Middle East and in particular the situation concerning Lebanon and Syria. And we also agreed to cooperate in the Security Council as concerns the report by Mr. Mehlis and Mr. Roed-Larsen that is to be delivered by the end of October. And we also exchanged opinions as regards the recent trip by Dr. Rice to the Central Asia countries and we agreed that we should continue our cooperation in order to preserve the stability in this region and in order to promote development of the countries of this region.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, Sergey, Minister Lavrov, for receiving me here. We did have very good and broad discussions, as the Minister said. He's gone through what our agenda was, and we also had a brief discussion of our responsibilities as members of the Quartet is the only thing that I would add because we, of course, want to see further progress in the Palestinian-Israeli issue and to create an environment there in which the Israelis and the Palestinians might move forward after the Gaza withdrawal.

I have nothing else to add. We can take a few questions.

QUESTION: Mr. Lavrov, Mr. Minister, do you believe that the Russians have a right to enrichment and under what conditions -- Iranians. Sorry, the Iranians. Under what conditions would you support Security Council action against Iran? Would you begin with a statement condemning Iran and urging them to resume negotiations if they do not come back to talks before the next IAEA meeting?

And Madame Secretary, can you tell us what differences remain between your position and the Russian position on Iran? How close have you come? What are the key sticking points?

Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV: We think that the current situation commits us to work quite actively on the Iranian nuclear dossier within the framework of IAEA. And IAEA inspectors are working in Iran on a permanent basis and they are preparing reports to the Board of Governors of this agency on the progress that they are making and we think that the current situation commits us to develop this issue and to do everything possible within the means of this organization without referring this issue to other organizations so far.

And I would like to stress the necessity that Iran cooperates with the IAEA in goodwill because there are some questions that international community has with regard to the Iranian nuclear program that need to be clarified. And we have said many times already that under no circumstances there will be permitted any violation by Iran of the nonproliferation regime.

QUESTION: Do they have the right to enrich? You didn't answer.

FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV: According to NPT treaty and according to the charter of IAEA, the countries that are participants to this treaty have this right.

SECRETARY RICE: We have discussed the Iranian issue. Our views are clear that the prospect of the referral of Iran to the Security Council remains for the international system and option. But we've said all along that we believe that there is time for negotiation if Iran is prepared to negotiate in good faith.

Now, we and Russia have common cause in our attempts to help the Europeans and others to get the Iranians to, first of all, remove the many questions that the international system has about their program, but also to recognize that the NPT comes not just with rights but with obligations. And this is therefore not an issue of rights; this is an issue of whether or not the fuel cycle can be trusted in Iran. And our view is that Iran needs no civil nuclear power, but if they are going to have civil nuclear power that the structure of the Bushehr arrangement by which the Russians would take back fuel is a reliable way to make certain that there are no problems with the fuel cycle.

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