

Mogherini champions multilateralism at UN, defends Iran deal

The European Union's foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini on Tuesday championed multilateralism at the United Nations and defended the EU's position to preserve the Iran nuclear deal.

"The European Union and the United Nations were born out of the same founding idea after the two world wars: The idea that in order to avoid yet another catastrophe, we need to have a multilateral mechanism, a mechanism to work toward win-win solutions as the only alternative to a new continental and world war," Mogherini told the Security Council in a debate on UN-EU cooperation, Xinhua reported.

"This idea is still valid. And over the decades, our elective affinity has grown even stronger. There is a 'European way' to peace and security, and it is identical to the 'UN way' to peace and security."

She said that it is a way that rests on mediation, peacekeeping operations, sustainable development, protection of human rights, humanitarian assistance and respect for shared rules.

"Our support for the UN and for multilateralism is a choice based on our values. At the same time, it is a

pragmatic choice. A decision taken in a multilateral context is by definition more democratic and more inclusive, and therefore more robust and more sustainable over time.

"You will never hear the European Union question whether the UN serves our interests and values, because we know that it serves universal interests and values. And we know that this is a precondition for building sustainable peace and security, which is in our own ultimate interests, always," said Mogherini.

She defended the July 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the six world powers of Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States, citing the need for "a solid multilateral architecture for non-proliferation and disarmament."

Under the deal, Iran agreed to limit its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. The United States unilaterally withdrew from the deal in May 2018 and later reinstated sanctions against Iran. Other signatories to the deal have been trying to salvage the pact, but US sanctions have largely scared off European companies from doing



EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini addresses a meeting held by the UN Security Council at the UN headquarters in New York, the US, on March 12, 2019.

business with Iran.

"Our collective security requires a solid multilateral architecture for non-proliferation and disarmament. This is why the European Union will continue to work to preserve the nuclear deal with Iran," said Mogherini.

"The global architecture for disarmament and non-proliferation is being questioned like never before. And to me, this is one of the greatest

paradoxes of our times," said Mogherini. "A new arms race – and a nuclear arms race in particular – can only make the world less secure."

Iran's implementation of its nuclear-related commitments has been confirmed in 14 consecutive reports of the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the latest verification being just a couple of weeks ago, she said.

"Alongside Iran's implementa-

tion, the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions is an essential part of the deal. So we will continue to work to preserve the economic dividends of sanctions lifting."

The Europeans have promised to help firms do business with Iran as long as it abides by the deal. Iran has itself threatened to pull out of the agreement unless EU powers demonstrably protect its economic benefits.

SNSC warns about 'suspicious' nuclear projects in region

The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) warned about "suspicious nuclear projects" pursued by certain regional countries as well as efforts aimed at undermining the security of the Islamic Republic and the region.

"Some [countries in the region] are spending petrodollars on suspicious nuclear projects... which can pose a more serious danger and crisis than the threat of Takfiri terrorists and Daesh to the region and even the world," Ali Shamkhani said on Wednesday, Press TV reported.

He said that the emergence of such new threats would prompt Iran to revise its defense strategy based on the nature and geography of the threats so that it would be able to meet the needs of the country and the Armed Forces.

"We constantly watch all activities of foreigners and certain evil countries of the West Asia region, especially certain unusual activities of some regional countries that have a proven black record of supporting terrorist movements," he added.

Shamkhani was apparently pointing to reports that the administration of US President Donald Trump was seeking to advance the sale of nuclear power technology to Saudi Arabia.

In February, a congressional committee revealed in a report that

the Trump administration was trying to bypass the US Congress to transfer sensitive nuclear power technology to Saudi Arabia.

The House of Representatives' Oversight Committee, which compiled the report, said it was now "launching an investigation to determine whether the actions being pursued by the Trump administration are in the national security interests of the United States or, rather, serve those who stand to gain financially as a result of this potential change in US foreign policy."

US Energy Secretary Rick Perry said at a conference on Tuesday that talks with Saudi Arabia about the deal were making progress.

"We're still making progress, we're still talking," Perry said. "Our intent is for them to be our partner as they build their nuclear energy."

The US administration's moves towards a nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia come as the US president unilaterally withdrew Washington from a landmark nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers in May 2018 despite international criticism and numerous reports by the UN nuclear agency verifying

Tehran's compliance with its obligations under the deal, which was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Watchful eye on foreign bases

In separate remarks on Wednesday, Shamkhani also warned about the establishment of military bases by certain extra-regional countries near Iran's borders, stressing the Islamic Republic would keep a watchful eye on them.

"Any effort aimed at destabilizing Iran's borders by any group or country will be met with [our] preemptive and a severe offensive," Shamkhani said, adding that Iran "will not allow the spearheads of creating instability and their mercenaries to undermine the security of nations and stability of the region."

The senior Iranian official said that over the past two years, certain terror groups backed by some regional and extra-regional countries struggled to undermine the security of the country's northwestern borders, but their attempts were foiled due to the vigilance and serious action of the Armed Forces and security bodies.

The US has set up numerous military bases and stationed thousands of forces in different countries of the world, including Iran's immediate neighbors Afghanistan and Iraq.

Iran warns of firm response if Israel acts...

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In November, US Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook called Iranian vessels a "floating liability," saying the US sanctions would bar them from international insurance markets, making them a risk for ports and canals which allow them access.

He warned global shipping and insurance industries that insuring Iranian tankers would incur penalties under Washington's sanctions

against Tehran.

"From the Suez Canal to the Strait of Malacca and all chokepoints in between, Iranian tankers are now a floating liability," he said. "Countries, ports and canal operators and private firms should know they will be likely responsible for the costs of an accident involving a self-insured Iranian tanker."

Following Hook's threat, Iran lodged a complaint with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) against the US over the

imposition of the bans, which target scores of Iranian ships.

As a specialized agency of the UN, the IMO – which has 174 member states – is tasked with regulating international shipping. The organization works to promote "safe, secure, environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping through cooperation," as its mission statement reads.

Reuters and Press TV contributed to this report.

ANALYSIS

Iraq, Iran build economic ties with US on the sidelines



In the contest for Iraq's loyalty, geography is proving irresistible.

Baghdad is being urged to take sides in the US-Iran confrontation that's escalated into one of the Middle East's top flashpoints. President Donald Trump is pushing Iraq to stop buying natural gas and electricity from its neighbor. President Hassan Rouhani wants it to purchase more to ease the pain imposed by American sanctions.

So far, Rouhani's winning. On a three-day state that ended Wednesday, he's held a press conference alongside his Iraqi counterpart, addressed businessmen, visited important Muslim shrines and chatted with tribal leaders. In December, after a 16-year American military presence, Trump caused a diplomatic furor by arriving unannounced in the middle of the night at a US base, speaking to troops and leaving without meeting top officials.

"The essential part of Rouhani's message is addressed to the US – Iran's on the ground in a major way," said Ihsan al-Shammari, an Iraqi political analyst. Tehran "is bolstering its relations in a broad way to support its political position inside Iraq."

Visas, trade

The two countries signed transportation and trade agreements, including one for the construction of a railroad link between the Iranian city of Shalamcheh and Iraq's oil hub at Basra. From next month, the neighbors will drop visa charges for each other's citizens, Iran's state-run Press TV reported. And Rouhani said officials planned to boost bilateral trade to \$20 billion from the current \$12 billion.

Obstacles to banking between the two nations have also been cleared. Secretary of the Iran-Iraq Chamber of Commerce Hamid Hoseini told Tasnim News Agency. Respective central bank governors signed an accord last month to make payments for oil and gas trade through non-US dollar bank accounts, using euros and Iraqi dinars to skirt US sanctions.

This week, Iraq paid the first installment of \$2 billion it owes for the import of Iranian gas and electricity, according to a report by Iran's Chamber of Commerce, which didn't specify the amount transferred. The payment had been delayed by the reimposition of US sanctions last year.

Iran and Baghdad have shared a unique alliance since the ouster of the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Iraq played a significant role in pushing Daesh terrorists out of Iraqi territory.

Not part of US policies

"We were standing by the Iraqi nation when times were hard and at a time of peace and security, we are at their side too," Rouhani said in comments on Monday, according to Iranian state media.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Iraq in January amid Arab doubts over the US commitment to their region following Trump's announcement that he wanted to pull troops from Syria. While those talks focused on security issues, Pompeo also spoke about reducing Iraq's reliance on imported energy that mostly comes from Iran.

He didn't get far, it seems. In a February interview in Moscow, Abdulkarim Hashim Mustafa, special adviser to Iraq's prime minister, put the record straight. "These are American sanctions and we have the right to protect our national interests," he said. "We tell them always: We are your friends but we are not part of your policies in the region."

The above article is excerpted from a news analysis by Bloomberg's journalists, Ladane Nasserli and Khalid al-Ansary, on March 13, 2019.

Japan, Iranian firm sign contract on water project

National Desk

The Japanese Embassy and the Iranian firm, Rural Water and Wastewater Co. in North Khuzestan Province have signed an agreement on human security projects, according to a fax report sent to Iran Daily.

The contract on "Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Projects," known as "GGP" was signed by Japan's Ambassador to Iran Mitsugu Saito and the company's Acting Managing Director Ramazani Hassanzadeh in the Japanese Embassy in Tehran on Monday.

The project contract, totaling at \$2,400, is an agreement

between the two sides on "The Project for Improvement of Access to Drinking Water for Domestic Use for Rural People in North Khuzestan Province."

Both sides decided to conclude the "Grant Assistance" for humanitarian support, addressing the serious water shortage of the country in recent years, the report said.

Addressing the signing ceremony, the Japanese envoy said, "We wish that the whole-hearted support of the people of Japan for the expansion and strengthening of friendship will reach people in North Khuzestan Province, as well as the great success of the project."

