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Plenary Session – WMD in the Middle East

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I would like to focus my remarks on the issue of the day regarding WMD in the Middle East, taking advantage of the presence on this panel of an eminent Iranian official : the Iranian nuclear crisis, whose stakes make this the most important issue today. Obviously, however, WMD are not limited to nuclear weapons, and the Middle East is more than just Iran : I will therefore also briefly address the broader issues. Finally, I will attempt to follow the guidance of the organizers : be forward-looking, propose solutions, and... be brief.

I. WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR CRISIS

If I choose to focus on this issue, it is because what is at stake is so important, to my country, to the European Union, to the international security system, and to the future of WMD in the Middle East. In other words, not because of what Iran *is* but of what it *does* : this is not an issue of labels. I won't go back over the facts and suspicions, but will just refer you on this point to the last report of the Director General of the IAEA and to the Board of Governors' resolution adopted Sept. 12, in terms of some of the outstanding questions and issues of concern. The basic issue at hand is that of a State, party to the Non-proliferation Treaty, that is strongly suspected of carrying out activities inconsistent with the stated peaceful nature of its nuclear program.

For an audience such as this one, the implications of such a situation for the non-proliferation regime and for the NPT are obvious, especially after the blow dealt to it by North Korea. However, there are also broader implications, both global and regional.

1/ Global implications of the nuclear crisis : the future of multilateralism, the credibility of the international community in upholding the basic tenets of collective security.

Multilateralism is not, in my view, an icon to be worshipped abstractly. It is a tool to strengthen our security : both our *national* security and our *collective* security. "Effective multilateralism" is not just a slogan, it is the only way to reconcile the requirements of national security and collective security.

In a world where States are confident enough in the wide-spread respect of common rules, they will not feel compelled to make their security depend exclusively, nor even primarily, on the excessive accumulation of military means, or their use.

The Iranian crisis leads us back to Fred Iklé's fundamental question : "*After violation, what ?*". In other words, how does the international community deal with States that are suspected of not abiding by their commitments? If the answer is only through the use of force, or

¹ These are personal observations. They do not necessarily represent the positions of the French government.

at the other end of the spectrum, by polite (or less polite, both are equally ineffective) hand-wringing, then this is not a world in which we can feel safe, not today nor tomorrow.

The way in which we handle the Iranian issue will therefore strongly affect the credibility of the international community in upholding the basic tenets of collective security. It is important to show that we are united in dealing with the fundamental challenges of WMD proliferation.

2/ Regional implications of a nuclear-armed Iran

Such a development would destabilize the current regional situation both directly and indirectly :

1) Directly, through the effect that this could have on other states of the region, either those that are presently NPT parties, and who might feel that their nuclear aspirations should be revived *or* those who are not presently NPT parties, and who might wish to adjust their nuclear posture / means in a destabilizing way.

2) Indirectly, this would be a clear set-back to the perspective of a zone free of WMD. This would be a strong set-back, paradoxically at the same moment that we witness the disappearance of a regime that had both possessed WMD, and used them, in the past, including against Iran - i.e. at the same moment that there is an occasion to seize.

Very much is clearly at stake. The choices that we make in the coming weeks and months will have a great impact on the shape of the Middle East, and the non-proliferation regime for the years and, perhaps decades, to come. In this context, «what is to be done» (shto delad' , the leitmotiv of this conference) is anything but a rhetorical question.

II – WHAT IS TO BE DONE ?

We must distinguish between short term and long term orientations.

· In the **short term**, it is very important to consolidate both the cohesion among the actors and the consensus on their objectives.

Strengthening cohesion among the actors.

What we have at the present moment is a tactical convergence : across the Atlantic ; within the E.U; to a larger extent than in the past perhaps with Russia ; and more broadly, in the international community. Witness the Sept. 12 IAEA Board of Governors' Meeting, which could not have adopted the resolution on Iran without such a broad convergence.

However, what we need to do is to make sure that this tactical convergence will withstand the test of the rougher waters ahead. This is difficult given the present lack of clarity regarding the strategic goals of different actors :

- the EU has stated formally and explicitly what kind of relations it wants with Iran, and what Iran must do to allow for such a relation (in the fields of non-proliferation, support for terrorism, and human rights). The EU is also ready to exert diplomatic and economic leverage to achieve this goal – something it can do because it has not cut off diplomatic and economic ties with Teheran.
- The U.S. administration on the other hand has not, because there is no answer to the question «what kind of relation does it want with Iran ?» and «what kind of Iran ?» Or rather, there are several very different answers, depending on who you talk to, and no single answer at the top. This, understandably, makes Teheran nervous.
- As for the Russian position vis à vis the Iranian nuclear program, it is probably still perceived ambiguously in Teheran, which does not help.

Consolidating the consensus regarding our objective, as far as the nuclear dossier is concerned

The bottom line is simple : we want to have confidence that Iran is not developing a nuclear weapons program.

For France (and for other European members I believe), this means desisting from any activity in the fuel cycle, at the very least until it is absolutely –and irreversibly- clear that all suspicions have been lifted, and answering all of the IAEA's questions and concerns in the appropriate time-frame.

This also means helping to maintain this confidence through :

- prompt and unconditional signature, ratification and full implementation of the additional protocol. However, we must keep in mind that the additional protocol is just a **tool**, not an end in itself.
- ratification of the CTBT, which Iran has already signed.

• **In the long term** : to make any short term solution stick, we need to address the regional and political context of the Iranian nuclear crisis.

In other words, we need to reduce the perceived **benefits** to going down the nuclear path, and ensure that the Iranian leadership does not see the possession of nuclear weapons as necessary, nor even beneficial, to its security.

Here, it is not the EU but the US and Israel that have a key role to play :

- the US must make up its mind and state a clear, straightforward policy, answering a simple question : is it the issue the violation of the NPT, or the current regime ?
- Israel could play a constructive role in reaffirming that it is prepared to surrender its nuclear weapons in the context of a just, stable and enduring M.E. peace., which I believe that it has already stated

Obviously, the prospects for such a peace are tragically bleak for the moment, but we should start thinking, quietly and methodically, about what type of regional security arrangements could be explored in the Middle East.

This will be necessary in any case, to deal with the status of Iraq : will we it keep it under a constraining ad hoc legal security regime, even after it is a sovereign government in every other respect ? Probably not. Will the international community lift all constraints on its armed forces and activities ? Probably not either.

Many ideas are floating around. What is important is to not turn this into a chicken and egg problem, and to draw on the experience of processes such as ACRS. In other terms, we need to ensure that a security dimension of the peace process is not hostage to the process, or lack thereof, but instead that such a dimension feed a political peace process, or at least accompany it on a parallel track. The ideas in the Carnegie Endowment paper (« Regional Security and Politics are the Solution, not the NPT») offer some promising avenues to explore. They are not the only ones. This is perhaps just a coincidence, but it is interesting to note that the protagonists of the Quartet (the UN, Russia, the U.S., the E.U.) are also well-suited to play a key role in the elaboration of a regional security arrangement, and also in dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue.

Turning back to the topic of this panel, we must keep in mind that WMD are not just nuclear weapons, and that the Middle East is not just Iran. As our Iranian colleagues often remind us, there are some States in the region that are neither parties to the CWC nor the BWC. Let's not forget though that there are also States in the region whom are parties to both Conventions, and that are suspected of developing both chemical and biological weapons. As far as ballistic missiles are concerned, especially medium-range and long-range missiles, we need to counter their proliferation, and ensure, as a first step, broader adherence to the ICOC among States in the Middle East. However, the strategic and political salience of the nuclear issue is such that if we do not solve this particular problem, the others may well become intractable.

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What the recent past has shown us in our field, if anything, is that history is not written in advance. It is what we make it to be – or don't, depending on the opportunities that we seize, those that we miss, and those that we create :

- In the 1970's, it was expected that by the year 2000, we would have some 30 nuclear powers to deal with (and one of them, by the way, would still be called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). The year 2000 came and went, and this pessimistic prediction proved, luckily, very far off the mark.

- On the other hand, in 1995, we obtained the indefinite prorogation of the NPT, we were close to signing the CTBT, we were negotiating a protocol to the BWC, and opening negotiations

on a fissile materials cut-off treaty did not seem unfeasible. Less than a decade later, these two treaties have suffered terrible blows, and these two negotiations have either been terminated or never started.

In other words, the best and worst can alternate, or coexist. We have a collective responsibility regarding the future of WMD in the Middle East.

To respect the tradition of this conference, I would like to conclude by illustrating the challenges we are dealing with a quote, from Leo Strauss, who has inspired more than one American neo-conservative. «*Perpetual progress toward perpetual peace means perpetual war* ». Let's hope that he was wrong, somewhere along the line...

Thank you very much.