



Pugwash Consultation

"Nuclear Energy and Proliferation Risks"

9 May 2017

Vienna International Centre

On 9 May 2017, Pugwash held a roundtable consultation in the margins of the NPT Preparatory Committee meetings in Vienna, looking at “nuclear energy and proliferation risks.” Thirty participants drawn from States Missions, International Organizations, and civil society discussed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran and prospects for the internationalization of the nuclear fuel cycle. The present report is a summary of the main topics discussed, prepared by the rapporteurs.¹

SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE MAIN POINTS

- There was general agreement that the JCPOA was a very positive solution to a complex issue, providing a constructive and peaceful way forward for the Middle East in particular, and the non-proliferation regime in general.
- The deal contained in the JCPOA is working as intended. Iran has been determined by the IAEA on multiple [6] occasions to be in full compliance with its obligations, and now has the most comprehensive safeguards and verification regime in history. World powers have followed through with some sanctions relief thereby aiding the Iranian economy. Furthermore, there have been other positive dimensions, including an effective joint commission process, greater transparency among parties, as well as communications and interactions taking place in a more positive atmosphere.
- At the same time, it was recognized that the deal is unstable: although the terms of the JCPOA were ring-fenced from the wider geopolitical environment of the Middle East, political manoeuvring can threaten its continued implementation. The spill-over of non-nuclear issues, often labelled under “Iranian behaviour”, should not be allowed to derail the process.
- It was noted in a positive sense that all the main candidates in the Iranian Presidential campaign have signalled their desire to continue with the JCPOA. However, several

¹ The rapporteurs for this report were Poul-Erik Christiansen and Roberta Mulas, Projects Assistants, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. Please note that the views presented here represent a range of opinions expressed in the meeting, and they do not necessarily reflect the personal views of the rapporteurs, nor of the Pugwash Conferences as an organization. The meeting was held according to traditional Pugwash/Chatham House rules to enable an open exchange of perspectives and exploration of creative possibilities for ways forward. Thus, the substance of the discussions can be reported out, but no item discussed can be attributed to any one individual. There was no attempt to seek consensus, and in fact the sharing of diverse views was encouraged.

participants felt that some of Iran's regional policies could undermine this, risking a negative reaction from the US and other states. Some argued that given Iran's disputed compliance history with IAEA safeguards agreements (which even two years later remains heated) and, in general, the uneasy relations in the past between Iran and IAEA, it is important that Iran continue to strictly comply to the letter of the JCPOA.

- The US domestic context provides perhaps the greatest potential risk to the sustainability of the JCPOA. It was noted that President Trump may not, after all, 'tear up' the deal. The possibility was raised that, because many in his national security team were seen as hostile to Iran, any minor safeguards violation may be seized upon to terminate the deal. Such a hard-line approach could isolate the US from a global consensus and weaken its hand in other relevant matters. There is further danger that Congress could act alone in enacting a bill (of which many are on the table) that would be in contravention of the JCPOA. This possibility was considered unrealistic by some participants.
- Some details of Security Council resolution 2231 were seen as problematic in a number of ways: the explicit provisions on ballistic missiles were viewed as an unnecessarily punitive measure unrelated to the main goals of the JCPOA; equally, some of the inquiry and resolution mechanisms were seen by some as unbalanced.
- The JCPOA should in any case be understood as a temporary solution. Even though continuing to implement it effectively would build more confidence, ultimately trust between Iran and some Western states will likely never be high. However, the deal does hold the potential for transformative progress in Iran-US relations, pending further steps to de-escalate and normalize relations.
- Many of Iran's neighbours worry that the remaining latent nuclear capacity has only delayed the possibility of a nuclear-armed Iran down the road; at the same time, many regional states are also pursuing nuclear fuel cycle programs. The JCPOA should also offer the international community an opportunity to consider how to extend some measures indefinitely and extend them to other countries. Regional stability and non-proliferation could be enhanced by extending some of the JCPOA provisions to the Middle East and beyond it.
- As such, Pugwash should make efforts to convene and organize meetings to explore far-reaching initiatives that are in the spirit of the agreement; for example:
 - initiatives to discuss 'internationalizing' the nuclear fuel cycle;
 - forward-looking regional agreements, such as a threshold of uranium enrichment, a ban on plutonium reprocessing, or limits on stockpiles of LEU;
 - innovative safeguards measures, such as advanced monitoring technology, enhanced access to centrifuge production facilities, or explicitly set times for snap inspections;
 - further multilateral scientific and technical cooperation, such as the SESAME project.