
RUSSIA HOPES IRAN'S URANIUM ENRICHMENT LEVEL WON'T EXCEED 5% - ENVOY

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Russia expects that Iran's new uranium enrichment level won't be higher than 5%, Russian Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Sunday.

"Iran has increased the [uranium] enrichment level. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will need some time to confirm and measure this new level. I hope this won't be above 5% instead of 3.67% under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," Ulyanov wrote on his Twitter account.

According to the diplomat, there is no threat of nuclear proliferation. "That's just another signal that Tehran expects that the balance in the JCPOA will be restored," he said.

Earlier, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister and chief nuclear negotiator Abbas Araghchi announced that starting from July 7 Tehran was switching to the second stage of scaling down its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the nuclear program and was beginning to enrich uranium beyond the level of 3.67%. Soon, Tehran plans on increasing the level of enrichment to 5%, above the level set by the JCPOA, in order to build power units for the Bushehr power plant. The senior diplomat said Iran would continue scaling down its commitments under the nuclear deal every 60 days unless its parties stick to the reached agreements.

Tensions over Iran's nuclear program exacerbated after Washington unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018 and slapped US economic sanctions on Iran's oil exports. A year later, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that Tehran was scaling back some of its commitments under the JCPOA and said other parties to the deal had to return to its implementation within two months. The JCPOA was signed between Iran, five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (Russia, the United Kingdom, China, the United States and France) and Germany in 2015. The deal limited Iran's nuclear development in exchange for lifting the UN, US and EU sanctions.

Iran pledged not to enrich uranium above the level of 3.67% for 15 years and maintain enriched uranium stockpiles at the level not exceeding 300 kg, as well as not to build new heavy-water reactors, not to accumulate heavy water and not to develop nuclear explosive devices.

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