

Iran sanctions draft to be revised **Nuclear**

Thu. 14 Feb 2008

By Louis Charbonneau



UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Key world powers will revise a draft resolution on new sanctions against Iran over its atomic program and call a vote after a U.N. nuclear report on Iran is issued, Britain's U.N. envoy said on Wednesday.

Washington had been pushing for a swift vote on the third sanctions resolution against Iran.

But South Africa and other elected members of the U.N. Security Council have been pressing the five permanent council members -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China -- to wait for a new progress report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Iran due next week.

The permanent members met with the 10 elected members to discuss the resolution. After the meeting, Britain's ambassador to the United Nations, John Sawers, was asked when a vote on the resolution could be expected.

"I don't think this resolution's going to be adopted before the IAEA report comes out," Sawers told reporters. The IAEA report is expected to be released around February 20-22.

"We received various views on the text that we circulated," he said, referring to a draft sanctions resolution obtained in full by Reuters. "We're going to incorporate the views into a revised text next week and introduce it next week."

Western countries say the Vienna-based IAEA's investigation of Iran's past nuclear activities is important but has little relevance to the future of Tehran's atomic program, which they fear may one day be used to make nuclear weapons.

They say Iran's refusal to comply with Security Council demands that it stop enriching uranium supports their suspicion that Tehran is seeking atomic weapons. Iran says its nuclear program is peaceful and enrichment a sovereign right.

South Africa and other members of the Non-Aligned Movement insist that the IAEA's investigation is relevant and want the council to wait until it has as much information as possible.

South African Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo repeated this view after the meeting and was backed by Panamanian Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias, currently Security Council president.

"We have to wait for the report of the IAEA because it's a factor to have to consider in this, it's not the only factor but it's a factor to consider," Arias told reporters.

OBJECTIONS

The draft resolution calls for asset freezes and mandatory travel bans for specific Iranian officials and vigilance on all banks in Iran. It also repeats the council's demand that Iran halt nuclear enrichment activity.

It was not clear what parts of the draft would be revised. South Africa has objected to a section urging states to inspect suspicious cargo to and from Iran transported by the firms Iran Air Cargo and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line.

Libyan Ambassador Giadalla Ettalhi told reporters he had reservations about the draft but gave no details. Diplomats say Tripoli, which until recently was itself the target of U.N. sanctions, opposes the idea of sanctions in general.

Washington had hoped that the vote could come before the IAEA report, which diplomats say will announce that the agency has resolved most outstanding questions about Iran's past nuclear activity.

But U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice expressed more modest expectations on Wednesday.

"I would hope that within a few weeks, at least, we would be able to get a vote, an affirmative vote," Rice told the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee.

(Editing by Eric Beech)