

**“Expert Roundtable on Iran-Saudi Agreement in Beijing:
Security Paradigm Shift in the ME?”**

Monday, 26 June 2023 from 3-5 pm Vienna time



**Statement of
Dr. Ayman Khalil**

Dear Ambassador Soltanieh,

thank you for this opportunity and timely session.

I will attempt answering the host questions and then provide a quick outline about our effort of hosting Saudi-Iranian dialogue sessions in Amman (this what we refer to as the Amman Framework).

As a faithful citizen of the Middle East, I was filled with hope and joy to witness the Chinese brokered development and the restoration of Saudi-Iranian diplomatic ties. This is a win-win-win situation, for the Iranians: resuming relations with Saudi Arabia opens a new economic opportunity, for the Saudis:

the deal paves the way for less hostilities and a more stable Yemen and for the Chinese: this represents a new avenue for growing influence in the Middle East.

Now for the Saudi Iranian security and technical dialogue sessions which were held in Amman with the participation of Saudi and Iranian intellectuals joining on their personal capacities, we had the honour of hosting two sessions since 2021 and working to host a third session in 2023.

Participants in the dialogue addressed a wide range of topics including Iran's nuclear program, origins of growing tensions between Arabs and Iran, tangible steps to deescalating tensions and features of a possible regional security structure.

The dialogue stressed the importance of developing tangible solutions to pressing issues. With the Saudi-Iranian standoff often resulting into a no-win situation; both sides stressed on the importance of a positive, constructive and cooperative relations rather than engaging in potential conflicts. Saudi and Iranian participants identified main fears and concerns perceived by each side. A list of threat perceived by both sides was recognized.

Based on identified fears and concerns, participants in the meeting proposed a number of practical actions as well as confidence building measures which paves the way to sustained relations based on mutual interest and respect between Saudi Arabia and Iran, namely:

- 1- Given existing fears and the present state of suspicion pertaining to Iran's nuclear program, transparency is highly needed to resolve current misconceptions. While restoring the Iran nuclear deal is an important regional and international confidence building measure, the dialogue proposed the introduction of bilateral visits to nuclear facilities in both countries to resolve ambiguities. Such arrangements could be coordinated via the Jordanian side represented by the Arab Institute for Security Studies

- 2- In light of the growing number of peaceful nuclear programs in the region, there is an important need to develop the basis of a regional consortium for technical cooperation to provide nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes which guarantees continued and non-obstructed operations of peaceful nuclear power plants on both sides of the Gulf region. The proposed consortium offers

joint ownership on nuclear fuel by Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Natural Uranium Arab Agency (part of the Arab Institute for Security Studies) can expand its mandate to include Saudi Arabia, Iran and other regional countries. This important mechanism provides the basis of a technical cooperation framework between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

3- The Amman dialogue discussed the possibility of establishing a bilateral version of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to coordinate nuclear activities between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Since JCPOA is the most comprehensive agreement during the history of non-proliferation, it would be important to benefit from the principle of JCPOA on a regional basis for higher levels of nuclear transparency which would include nuclear safety, regional verification and peaceful nuclear cooperation.

Concluding Remarks

Your excellency the basic obstacle for nuclear program in this part of world is enrichment. If I may say the bulk of Iranian nuclear program. The intention is to provide a win-win situation. Benefiting from enrichment without enriching. This was the concept that was proposed. Iran has a huge surplus of enriched under the level of 6 % which might pave the way for regional consortium for sharing fuel. Iranian fuel is basically non fabricated which provide us with opportunity.

The other issue is transformation and verification. We have proposed through these workshops that the more pressure you apply to stakeholder and states in this part of the world, the more unachievable. The more unachievable become instrumental to international legislations. The intention is to provide measure adopted and incorporated by member states, including Iran, Saudi Arabia and Arab states, hopefully expand to reaching Israel in the near future. I would be more than happy to share with you and other distinguished audience such ideas after the session is concluded.

Thank you!