

I want to start things off by making something very clear: Russia is committed to a stable, peaceful middle east. We will not tolerate violence, the loss of life, the slaughter of women and children. Before I describe Russia's position in this issue, I would like to ask all of you world leaders gathered here today a simple question: are we going to be civilized and resolve our differences through peaceful diplomacy, or will we descend into grisly barbarism and betray our better natures? The choice is ours to make, and Russia, for one, chooses peace.

Now, I'm going to respectfully suggest that Russia is in a unique position to peacefully resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis. As a third party with significant standing in the world community, only we Russians are in a position to satisfy Iranian demands, while ensuring enduring nuclear security for the West and Israel. Russia can help everyone emerge from these negotiations with a compromise that is not only peaceful and rational, but economically beneficial. The Chinese use the same word for crisis and opportunity.

Unlike other major powers in these negotiations, Russia has a long-standing business relationship with Iran. Since the mid-nineties, our Ministry of Atomic Energy has provided crucial aid for the Iranian development of an indigenous nuclear energy program - most notably with the VVER-1000 MWe light water reactor at Bushehr - and we support and will continue to support Iran's right as a sovereign nation to pursue nuclear power. Before some of you get hot under the collar about this, I would like to stress that the Russian commitment to Iranian nuclear power stems not from ideology, but rather from apolitical economic rationality. Sustainable nuclear power in Iran will reduce its reliance on domestic oil, thus postponing Iran's "peak oil" and incrementally stabilizing Middle Eastern oil markets. Nuclear power promotes economic stability and prosperity, and I think I make an uncontroversial claim when I say that prosperity promotes peace.

However, we Russians understand Western concerns about a nuclear Iran. We, too, are disappointed that Iran has refused to meet proper IAEA protocol and has enflamed Western fears by being so resistant to internationally approved inspections of its nuclear enrichment program. But what western powers need to recognize is that Iran simply will not tolerate supervision by a Western-dominated international coalition. Western powers may have the best of intentions, but Iran has legitimate reasons to consider this kind of western oversight as an attempt to gain influence over Iran's actions by limiting its energy independence. So western powers have a choice: either they can continue to ask for the impossible, or they can seek a compromise - a compromise that respects Iran's sovereignty while promoting security - a compromise only Russia is in a position to provide.

Our request is simple. We ask that Iran halt its domestic uranium enrichment and instead seek a joint uranium enrichment program, on Iranian soil with Russian oversight, that would encompass full IAEA transparency. This is a solution palatable to all interested parties. Western powers should see that the success and safety of the Russian nuclear program, coupled with the relative instability of other nearby nuclear powers, means that Russia is far and away the best nation to oversee future Iranian nuclear activity. Russian oversight should also satisfy Iran. It would allow them to attain nuclear power and continue a very profitable business relationship, without having to sacrifice their national independence, or pay the dire costs of war.

I would like to leave you with one final, crucial point: Russia stands for peace,

civility, and resolution. We stand for a compromise that would benefit the entire world. We humbly ask all of you to accept our olive branch.