

## REFLECTIONS ON THE EU-IRAN HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR COOPERATION, 26-27 NOVEMBER 2018

We have [previously](#) commented on the Iran “nuclear deal”, more correctly known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and the potential consequences of the Trump Administration’s withdrawal from it some six months ago.

### JCPOA

We noted there that Iran had “shown off” its capability to enrich uranium to worrying quantities, pushing the boundaries of the agreement in a manner designed not only as a retaliatory statement against Israel and the US, but also the EU if it did not live up to its side of the bargain. The EU, along with China and Russia, remains a supporter of the deal.

That threat came a step closer this week with a statement by Ali Akbar Salehi, Vice President and head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, who stated that Iran may resume enriching uranium to 20 per cent, well above the level needed for civil nuclear power plants. In an interview with [Reuters](#), Salehi mentioned that Iran is failing to see the economic benefits of the 2015 deal, adding: “If we cannot sell our oil and we don’t enjoy financial transactions, then I don’t think keeping the deal will benefit us anymore.”

### Sanctions

Clearly, US sanctions imposed after their withdrawal from the agreement are having an effect and making it difficult for Iran to trade, even though the EU has [announced](#) its intention to create a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to “facilitate payments related to Iran’s exports (including oil) and imports, which will assist and reassure economic operators pursuing legitimate business with Iran”.

In the US context, it is worth noting that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) maintains that Iran is keeping its side of the agreement. In a [statement](#) to the IAEA’s Board of Governors on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, Director General Yamano stated: “Iran is implementing its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It is essential that Iran continues to fully implement those commitments.”

### EU-Iran Seminar

Ali Akbar Salehi’s statement was made ahead of the third *EU-Iran High-level Seminar on International Nuclear Cooperation*, held in Brussels on Monday and Tuesday of this week with the aim of building confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme. In the margins of the seminar, Vice President Salehi met with the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini.

Salehi and Mogherini re-affirmed their commitment to the continued full and effective implementation of the JCPOA, took stock of recent developments and expressed their determination to preserve the nuclear agreement as a matter of respecting international agreements and a key pillar for the European and regional security. During their meeting, Federica Mogherini also reiterated the EU position on issues of concern, such as Iran’s role in the region.

## Future Activities

The seminar also identified a number of future joint activities related to the nuclear governance framework, as well as research and training relating to nuclear safety and radiation protection.

These activities will include:

- the organisation of seminars on nuclear law and on reporting under the [Joint Convention](#),
- participation in key European nuclear stakeholder conferences
- sharing of experience and methodology for performing nuclear stress-tests
- enhanced collaboration in the field of R&D
- a further package of safety related projects financed under the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Co-operation
- organisation of a stakeholders' conference to leverage international support for the establishment of the Nuclear Safety Centre.

Participants also agreed to continue to implement the agreed roadmap on R&D co-operation, including a joint project on radioactivity measurement capabilities.

The seminar reconfirmed the existing understanding that international nuclear co-operation, and nuclear governance, are important elements that should be developed in parallel in order to optimise benefits for all sides.

The EU and Iran expressed satisfaction at progress achieved so far in the areas of nuclear co-operation and governance, and agreed to hold a follow-up high-level seminar in 2019. However, the success of that may depend on the success of the SPV.

## About the Author

*Prospect Law is a multi-disciplinary practice with specialist expertise in the energy and environmental sectors with particular experience in the low carbon energy sector. The firm is made up of lawyers, engineers, surveyors and finance experts.*

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## Previous Articles

[11th June 2018 Article about Iranian Uranium Enrichment](#)

[6th December 2016 Article about business in Iran, further to the lifting of sanctions](#)

[13th October 2016 Article about Dollar transactions with Iran](#)

[26th July 2016 Article about Iran's quest for a credit rating](#)

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