

## End double standards on nukes: Egypt

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**CAIRO:** Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit called yesterday for an end to nuclear double standards, after the UN imposed sanctions on Iran for refusing to halt uranium enrichment.

"The negligence of certain Western countries over questions of non-proliferation, and the fact that they permit some states to acquire a nuclear capacity while preventing others from doing so, is nothing but double standards," the foreign minister said in a statement.

"That must stop," he added. "It is known that Israel has a nuclear capability that is not subject to any control by the International Atomic Energy Agency," the UN's nuclear watchdog in Vienna.

Israel has never officially admitted having nuclear weapons, but it is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, and refuses to allow international inspections of its Dimona nuclear facility.

"The fact that some countries obtain peaceful nuclear technology, that they master some steps in making nuclear fuel ... does not in any way mean they can be deemed to be 'nuclear countries,' because nuclear countries are those that have military nuclear capabilities," the Egyptian foreign minister said.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad defiantly declared Iran "a nuclear country ... whether the West likes it or not" after the UN Security Council on Saturday voted unanimously to impose sanctions on Iran's nuclear industry and ballistic missile programme.

Iran is suspected of secretly developing nuclear weapons, but its government insists that its nuclear programme is for civilian purposes only and that it will keep expanding its uranium enrichment capability.

Egypt recently revived its civilian nuclear programme after a 20-year freeze, with hopes of building a nuclear power station by 2020.

UN sanctions against Iran will not prevent Moscow from honouring all its contracts signed with Tehran, Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov was reported as saying yesterday.

"There is an arrangement in this resolution," Lavrov told Russian President Vladimir Putin according to Russia's Interfax news agency. "All the contracts signed before the resolution remain in place and can be honoured."

According to Lavrov's remarks the UN measure would not affect areas like Russia's \$1bn contract to construct Iran's Boucheh nuclear power station, due to be up and running next September.

While describing the sanctions resolution as a compromise, Lavrov said the international community nonetheless had managed to strike a balance between three objectives: "To avoid violating the non-proliferation regime, maintain conditions for negotiation with Iran and not to destroy legitimate links with Iran in different domains."

Prepared by the Europeans, the UN resolution was amended several times before being adopted to satisfy objections by Russia and China which maintain close economic and energy ties with Tehran. Washington, by contrast, had lobbied for a tougher text.

China said yesterday sanctions were not the solution and called for new talks with Tehran.

Sanctions are not a long-term, comprehensive solution of the problem, said foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao.

"We hope that the resolution is earnestly enforced, but we also think that sanctions ... cannot be a permanent solution to the problem."

China "upholds political and diplomatic efforts to peacefully solve the Iran nuclear question by talks," said Liu.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso urged Iran to stop its uranium enrichment activities and return to the negotiating table.

Aso spoke to his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki by telephone. - Agencies

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