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Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov Following Meeting of Foreign Ministers from Six World Powers on Iranian Nuclear Problem, Vienna, June 2, 2006

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Foreign Minister Lavrov: Today a very important stage of efforts took place on securing a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear problem. Six countries - the European trio, the US, Russia and China - at the level of the Foreign Ministers held a meeting at the end of which agreement was reached to come up with a very serious offer to Iran - to start talks to resolve this entire situation on the basis of a suspension of uranium enrichment activities in line with the IAEA decisions. Accordingly, work in the UN Security Council would be suspended in this situation.

We count on Iran responding to this appeal and sitting down at the negotiation table. It is crucial that the talks offer has followed from all six countries, including the US, for which, of course, it was a far from easy step. I guess the US has had no relations with Iran for twenty-six years, if not more.

We hope that all together at the negotiating table we will be able to work out a solution which will permit ensuring Iran's lawful right to peaceful nuclear energy. This is our common stand and at the same time a solution which will guarantee that the nuclear nonproliferation regime will be observed. We hope that the signal which we will in the next few days send to Iran now with a detailed description of our offers will be received constructively and that the talks will be able to start.

Question: When will the talks with Iran begin? What proposals form the "European package"?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: You understand that none of us will go into detail. First of all, this has to be conveyed to Iran, and only then will we look at the Iranian authorities' reaction. I don't think that somebody of the participants in today's negotiations will go into detail: this does not promote a healthy atmosphere around the entire situation. The main point now is not to harm the process which, I repeat, is very significant and to see that the process is embodied into real negotiations.

Question: Was the question of providing security guarantees to Iran discussed?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: I have already answered all these questions. The package of offers that was examined encompasses three spheres. They are the nuclear program as such and economic and trade cooperation with Iran and political and security issues.

Question: Can Iran also be expected to be invited to such a meeting?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: To such a meeting Iran cannot be invited because it was dedicated to an offer to Iran to start talks. If it is accepted, then not at such a meeting, but at the talks Iran will be present.

Question: What is the role of Russia? As before?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: It is very important. Russia from the outset backed the efforts which the European trio was undertaking after it began talks with Iran. Subsequently, when these talks stalled owing to the well-known circumstances, when Iran ceased to cooperate with the European trio in the framework of the previously adopted IAEA decisions, Russia, China and the US joined those talks. Yet not the talks as such, but the elaboration of positions, the finding of a way out of the impasse in which the process had found itself. Russia was contributing its own ideas, its own input to the offers being worked out by the European trio. Today we can say that the collective creative work and efforts of the six countries have produced the result as expressed in the invitation to Iran to begin concrete talks. Hopefully, these offers will be constructively received.

Question: You had separate talks with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: No.

June 2, 2006