

Talks with 5+1 must resolve nuclear issue, Iran says - Tehran Times

Political Desk

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TEHRAN – New Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Iran is keen to resume talks with the major powers over its nuclear program, with the goal of resolving the issue.

“In response to Ms. Ashton in a phone conversation, I emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran is keen to resume talks,” Zarif told the Mehr News Agency on Monday, in reference to the phone conversation that EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton held with him on Saturday.

Ashton leads diplomatic efforts to resolve the decade-old nuclear dispute on behalf of the six major powers, namely the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France, and Germany, which are known as the 5+1 group.

Zarif said, “I told Ms. Ashton that we want the issue to be resolved, not that negotiations be held for the sake of negotiations.”

According to AFP, a statement from Ashton’s spokesperson said that the EU foreign policy chief “underlined her continued determination and commitment to seek a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue” during her conversation with Zarif, who formerly served as Iran’s ambassador to the United Nations.

It added that she said the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany that Ashton represents in the negotiations “were ready to work with the new Iranian negotiating team as soon as they were appointed.”

“She confirmed the need for substantial talks that will lead to concrete results swiftly,” it said, adding that Ashton and Zarif “agreed to meet soon”.

Early this month Ashton called on Iran's new President Hassan Rohani to agree a fresh round of negotiations as soon as possible.

Rohani has said Iran is ready for "serious" talks on its nuclear program without delay.

He headed Iran's nuclear negotiating team under reformist president Mohammad Khatami in the early 2000s, and Western leaders have expressed hope his election could herald a more constructive approach in the protracted talks.

But Rohani has said there could be no surrender of the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy that Iran has under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

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