

Outstanding issues remain for Iran, despite progress – UN atomic watchdog chief

22 February 2008 – The head of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said today that it has made “quite good progress” in clarifying unresolved issues over Iran’s past nuclear programme, but several hurdles remain.

“We have managed to clarify all the remaining outstanding issues, including the most important issue, which is the scope and nature of Iran’s enrichment programme,” Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency’s Director General, told reporters after circulating his latest report on Iran’s nuclear safeguards to the IAEA Board of Governors, which is scheduled to discuss it in Vienna on 3 March.

But the agency has yet to get to the bottom of the country’s alleged past weaponization studies, he said.

Although the IAEA has no indication that such studies pertained to nuclear material, Mr. ElBaradei noted that it is crucial to clarify the issue.

He also stressed the importance of ensuring that “Iran’s current activities are also exclusively for peace purposes.”

To this end, the IAEA has requested the country to conclude the Additional Protocol, which gives the agency additional authority to visit sites and access additional documents to ensure that there are no undeclared nuclear activities.

“On that score, Iran in the last few months has provided us with visits to many places that enable us to have a clearer picture of Iran’s current programme,” the Director General said. “However, that is not, in my view, sufficient.”

The country’s nuclear programme – which Iranian authorities have stated is for peaceful purposes, but some other countries contend is driven by military ambitions – has been a matter of international concern since the discovery in 2003 that Iran had concealed its nuclear activities for 18 years in breach of its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In December 2006, the Security Council adopted a resolution banning trade with Iran in all items, materials, equipment, goods and [technology](#) which could contribute to the country's enrichment-related, reprocessing or heavy water-related activities, or to the development of nuclear-weapon-delivery systems. It tightened the measures in March, banning arms sales and expanding the freeze on assets.

However, a United States intelligence report released late last year concluded that there has been no ongoing nuclear weapons programme in Iran since the fall of 2003, which Mr. ElBaradei said tallies with the findings of the IAEA.

Since Iran did not declare its nuclear programme for nearly two decades, he told the press today that there is a "confidence deficit" on the part of the international community towards the country regarding its future nuclear intentions.

"I hope that Iran will continue to work closely with the [Security](#) Council, to create the conditions for Iran and the international community to engage in comprehensive negotiation that would lead to a durable solution," the Director General, who visited the country last month, said.