

UN Security Council Imposes New Sanctions Against Iran

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The United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution imposing a third round of sanctions on Iran for its controversial nuclear [program](#). But as VOA's Margaret Besheer reports from United Nations headquarters in New York, the vote was not unanimous.

Indonesia was the sole hold out among the council's 15 members. Ambassador Marty Natalegawa told his colleagues that his country is not convinced that more sanctions are the most sensible way to go and would therefore abstain from voting.

"Essentially, we are not convinced that more sanctions, however incremental, well-targeted and reversible will move us forward in resolving the question of Iran's nuclear program or whether it would only give a potentially negative impact at a time when progress is being made," said Ambassador Natalegawa.

Resolution co-sponsors France and Britain had hoped for complete consensus among the council, but said the near unanimous vote still sent a clear signal to Iran. Britain's U.N. Ambassador John Sawers:

"Its adoption sends a clear message to the government and the people of Iran," said Ambassador Sawers. "It underlines yet again that the international community is profoundly concerned that Iran might be intending to use its nuclear program for military purposes."

The United States welcomed the passage of resolution 1803. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters it is up to Iran to change course, if not, the international community would have to increase its pressure. But he noted that the United States supports a diplomatic resolution to the issue.

The resolution passed Monday tightens some existing sanctions and imposes additional travel and financial sanctions on Iranian individuals and companies. Ahead of the vote, Iran's envoy said any new sanctions would be illegal and he warned that Tehran would never give up its legitimate right to pursue peaceful nuclear energy.

The resolution was accompanied by a statement from the foreign ministers of the five permanent security council members (US, UK, France, Russia and China) and Germany, reiterating their commitment to a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue and urged Tehran to reconsider a June 2006 package of political, economic and security benefits in exchange for its suspension of uranium enrichment.

The statement also recognizes Iran's right to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in line with its obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and adds that once the international community is convinced Iran's nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes it will be treated as any other country that is a party to the NPT.

Western powers had hoped to move the latest sanctions resolution through the council quickly, but it required weeks of negotiations because of objections from non-permanent members Indonesia, South Africa, Vietnam and Libya. The later three ultimately agreed to vote in favor.

Two previous Security Council sanctions resolutions have demanded that Iran stop enriching uranium, but Tehran has not complied and says it is its legal right to continue enriching uranium for peaceful purposes. Many countries fear Iran's actions are intended for the production of nuclear bombs, not energy.

The U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency said in a report on February 22, that Iran has made progress in providing information about its nuclear program, but not enough to prove it is developing its nuclear program solely for peaceful purposes.