

## OPINION

## 25-year cooperation document, great window of opportunity

By Nozar Shafiei\*

In March 2021, Iran and China signed a 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and on Friday, during a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian to China, the agreement became operational.

The beginning of the implementation of this document should be considered a serious step toward improving relations and securing the interests of the two countries. Basically, any bilateral or multilateral agreement is defensible if it serves national interests.

The 25-year cooperation document includes a wide range of cooperation in different political, economic and cultural fields, the realization of which will surely have many benefits for Iran.

Estimates at the level of experts and public opinion indicate that this agreement is a "win-win" deal with "full benefits" for both sides. It means that each side is satisfied with what they gain from this cooperation, and this is in contrast to the situation of "relative benefits," in which the benefits to a country are more or less than the other.

With the implementation of this agreement, the two current problems facing Iran's economy, namely old technology and lack of resources, can be solved over time.

The Chinese can invest in major projects in Iran and at the same time develop some of the necessary infrastructures. In addition to the long-term benefits in the field of economy, this cooperation in the short term can be a great window of opportunity for Tehran, which is under heavy sanctions.

Some are concerned about whether China will be able to meet its obligations under the 25-year cooperation document. Each country must have both the will and the ability to fulfill its obligations.

In terms of capability, China has made significant advances in technology and economy over the past two to three decades, and in fact China today is very different from 30 years ago. Therefore, it can be confidently said that Beijing has the ability to fulfill its obligations under the 25-year document.

Regarding the issue of whether China has the will to implement the agreement in a way that serves the interests of both countries, the future will determine. But the current situation suggests that conditions are prepared for the implementation of the document.

In addition to the economic sphere, which will benefit Iran, long-term political cooperation with China will have a significant impact on stabilizing Tehran's regional and international position.

In fact, it is reasonable for countries to expand their relations in different areas, otherwise their initiatives to play a role in the international system and take advantage of its existing capacities will decrease. Given the fact that Iran's relations with Western countries are at a standstill, cooperation with the East, in the form of a 25-year agreement with China, or a similar example with Russia and other countries, will certainly promote Iran's initiative in international relations.

Therefore, we should welcome the implementation of the 25-year cooperation agreement with China and at the same time be careful not to fall into the trap of "Chinese debt diplomacy".

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## President calls for reopening of live events in compliance with health protocols

Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi called for arrangements for the presence of people at exhibitions and sports stadiums while complying with the coronavirus health protocols.

Speaking at a Saturday meeting of the country's National Headquarters for Managing and Fighting the Coronavirus, Raeisi said sports events and exhibitions across the country should be held in strict compliance with the health protocols, and with the limited presence of visitors, according to Tasnim News Agency.

The president assigned the organizations in charge to cooperate with the Health Ministry to make arrangements for the reopening of such events.

Hailing a remarkable decline in the number of coronavirus cases and fatalities in Iran, the president stressed the need to continue complying with the protocols strictly and proceed with monitoring activities.

The figures released by the Iranian Health Ministry on Saturday marked one of the lowest daily deaths from the pandemic since its outbreak in February 2020.

According to the country's Health Ministry, 18 patients died from COVID-19 from Friday to Saturday. The ministry put the total death toll at 132,044, according to IRNA.

The ministry reported 1,421 new positive cases in 24 hours, bringing the total number of coronavirus cases to 6,218,741.

According to the ministry, 18 provinces, out of the country's 31 provinces, reported no deaths in the same period.



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## Iran blames cruel US sanctions for UN voting right suspension

Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations said the cruel and unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States are to blame for the suspension of the Islamic Republic's right to vote at the United Nations General Assembly.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi on Friday said that the US sanctions had resulted in Iran's failure to pay membership dues to the world body, but expressed hope that Tehran's efforts to end the suspension would bear fruit soon, Press TV reported.

His remarks came as Iran has been denied the right to cast its vote on various matters at the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council for a second consecutive year.



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and consecutive year.

The US reimposed the sanctions after leaving the 2015 agreement with Iran and world

powers that had partially suspended the coercive economic measures.

"As an active member of the

UN, Iran has always been committed to paying up its membership dues on time, and we have proven this in practice but, unfortunately, due to the cruel and unilateral sanctions [by the US], we faced the problem of paying up our membership fee for the second consecutive year," Takht-Ravanchi said.

He also stressed that the restrictions are not only impeding Iran's access to humanitarian items, including medicine and medical equipment, but the bans are also impeding the UN's work.

The Iranian envoy further noted that the Islamic Republic is working to secure a safe financial channel to pay its UN membership dues and reclaim

its voting right.

Takht-Ravanchi also said that Iran is already discussing the issue with UN officials and hopes that it will be solved in the shortest time possible.

Earlier this month, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said that a total of 11 countries, including Iran, are behind in their payments.

Under the UN Charter, a member country's right to vote is suspended when its arrears equal or exceed the amount of dues it should have paid over the preceding two years, but if the outstanding debt is deemed to be due to conditions beyond the control of the member, the assembly may allow that country continue to vote.

## Iranian official proposes formation of union against bullying powers' excessive demands



Iran's Vice-President for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaei (C R) talks with Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega (C) in a meeting in Managua.

Iran's Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaei has proposed the formation of a union of countries against sanctions and the excessive demands of bullying powers.

With consolidation, all should stand against US sanctions and plots, Rezaei said at a meeting with Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, according to IRNA.

In his remarks, Rezaei said that the Iranian nation and government pay special respect to Nicaragua's resistance against excessive demands.

He stressed that independent countries should make further efforts to expand their relations because the bullying powers, particularly the United States, are after preventing nations' development and cooperation.

He noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran has stood by Nicaragua and is ready to strengthen ties with the South American country.

For his part, the Nicaraguan president thanked Rezaei for attending his swearing-in ceremony and appreciated the strong spirit of the Islamic Republic against the enemies' pressures.

Ortega, who was sworn into office for his fourth consecutive term on Monday, described relations between Nicaragua and Iran as deep and cordial.

The Nicaraguan president also said his country pays great respect to Iran's top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was assassinated by the US in Iraq in January, 2020.

Referring to the ongoing negotiations between Iran and remaining signatories to the 2015 nuclear agreement in the Austrian capital of Vienna, which are aimed at securing the removal of US sanctions, Ortega said Nicaragua supports Iran's right to use peaceful nuclear energy.

## EU's Borrell: Deal on JCPOA revival 'possible'

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### 'Realistic approach'

Speaking from the Chinese city of Wuxi, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said a "good deal" would be within reach "as soon as possible" should the Western side continue the Vienna talks with a "realistic approach".

Amir-Abdollahian criticized the European parties to the JCPOA and the US, which is not directly participating in the talks, for "lacking initiatives".

"Both the European trio and the US utter good words through their non-papers or messages they send to us but they do not offer any initiatives," he told reporters after a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.

The Iranian minister said the West's concerns and its call for speeding up the talks stand in marked contrast with its lack of initiatives.

"I would like to say it loud that Iran welcomes a good deal in the shortest possible time, but such achieving such a deal depends on the Western sides," Amir-Abdollahian pointed out.

### Chinese opposition

At the meeting with the Ira-

nian minister, Wang reaffirmed China's opposition to unilateral sanctions by the United States against Iran.

"China firmly opposes the illegal unilateral sanctions against Iran, opposes political manipulation by taking advantage of human rights and other issues, and opposes gross interference in the internal affairs of Iran and other regional countries," Wang said, according to a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

China and Iran will "continue to firmly support each other in defending our core interests, hold high the banner of multilateralism, oppose hegemony and power politics, safeguard the basic norms of international relations, and safeguard international fairness and justice," he added.

Wang, who is also the state counselor, backed efforts to revive the JCPOA.

He said the US bore primary responsibility for "the current difficult situation" of the deal.

"The US unilaterally withdrew from the comprehensive agreement... and created the current difficult situation. It should take the main responsibility and correct its mistakes as soon as possible," Wang said.

