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World reacts to US withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal

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Full Text:

Summary: - While other parties to the deal regret US decision, Saudi Arabia and Israel welcome Donald Trump's decision

Reactions poured in from around the globe Wednesday following the U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal.

Trump on Tuesday pulled the U.S. out of the landmark nuclear agreement that world powers struck in 2015 with Iran. He opted not to extend sanctions relief on Iran ahead of a May 12 deadline, vowing instead to re-impose nuclear-related economic penalties.

As a leading party of the Obama-era nuclear agreement, Iran said in response that it would negotiate with countries remaining in the deal to see "if it's still good" for Tehran.

In a televised speech, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that there was a "short time" to negotiate, adding that he had instructed his Foreign Ministry to negotiate with the countries that did not withdraw from the nuclear agreement.

"The nuclear deal will continue if we see we can meet the demands of the Iranian people with the cooperation of five countries in the short period," Rouhani added.

All of the U.S.'s negotiating partners -- the U.K., France, Germany, Russia, China and the EU -- agree that maintaining the accord is the best way to reign in Iran's nuclear program.

Russia said it would not abandon the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), adding it was open to talks with other participants of the Iran nuclear deal.

- 'Important for our shared security'

"We are extremely concerned that the United States is once again acting contrary to the opinion of the majority of states and exclusively in its own narrow-minded and opportunistic interests, in flagrant violation of international law," read a Foreign Ministry statement.

In a joint statement, British Prime Minister Theresa May, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel emphasized their countries' ongoing commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"This agreement remains important for our shared security," the U.S.'s closest European allies said.

Separately, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian expressed concern about the political stability of the region after the U.S. withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear agreement.

In a written statement, the minister said Emmanuel Macron would meet with Rouhani Wednesday afternoon. "No, this agreement is not dead. There is a U.S. withdrawal from the agreement but the agreement exists," Le Drian said.

China, one of the countries that signed the deal, also regretted the U.S. decision.

In a news conference, China's special envoy to the Middle East, Gong Xiaosheng said Beijing "will maintain a dialogue with all parties, continue to preserve and implement the comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear program".

"Having a deal is better than no deal. Dialogue is better than confrontation," the envoy said, according to state media.

- 'Unfortunate step'

Turkey, for its part, called the decision to unilaterally withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal an "unfortunate step".

"Turkey has always defended the stance that issues regarding Iran's nuclear program should be resolved through diplomacy and negotiations and has made intensive efforts in this direction," the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a press release.

"As such, we consider it an unfortunate step that the U.S. has decided to withdraw from the deal," the Turkish statement added.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry expressed its "hope" that Trump's decision "would not lead to any armed conflicts in the region that threaten its stability and security".

Egypt called on Iran to abide by the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to secure the rights it has obtained through negotiation.

Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled al-Jarallah, in a press release, stressed the importance of Iran's nuclear deal, saying Kuwait "welcomed the agreement, because it contributes to the achievement of security and stability in the region".

"The existence of this agreement is better than no agreement," al-Jarallah added.

- Decreases trust in international deals

"Now, we, as the European Union, have to work to keep the deal as it is and prevent the possible escalation," Chancellor of Austria Sebastian Kurz tweeted.

The U.S. and Israeli concerns should be taken seriously, but treated separately from the deal, Kurz added.

Italy stressed the importance of the Iran nuclear deal, citing its contribution to regional security and the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons.

"Italy supports its European allies on the confirmation of pledges," Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni said.

In a written statement, Swedish Foreign Affairs Minister Margot Wallstrom said the move was "very saddening".

"[The U.S. withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal] has critically decreased the trust in international peace and security deals," she said.

She added it was "worrying" that Trump announced that the U.S. would implement new sanctions on Iran.

- JCPOA 'not perfect'

Hungarian Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Peter Szijjarto also underlined the significance of the Iran nuclear deal.

Speaking to reporters, Szijjarto said he hoped the Iran nuclear deal "which pledges a joint solution for global problems" would remain in place.

Canada also regretted the U.S. decision.

"Canada supports an effective rules-based international order, and believes that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is essential to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapons capability and to ensure greater regional and global security," Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland said in a written statement.

The statement said JCPOA is "not perfect", but helped to "curb a real threat to international peace and security".

"We continue to oppose Iran's support for terrorist organizations, its threats toward Israel, and its support for the [Bashar al-] Assad regime in Syria. We will continue to work closely with our allies and partners to hold Iran to account," it added.

Unlike European countries and other parties to the deal, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Israel and United Arab Emirates welcomed Trump's decision.

- 'Courageous decision'

Saudi Arabia "supports and welcomes" Trump's decision and "supports reinstating economic sanctions on the Iranian regime, which have been suspended under the nuclear deal", according to the official SPA news agency.

Riyadh said Iran "took advantage of the economic benefits afforded by the lifting of sanctions and used them to continue its destabilizing activities in the region".

Bahrain also supported the move, according to the official Bahrain News Agency.

"This decision reflects the commitment of the United States to confront Iranian policies and Iran's continuous attempts to spread terrorism in the region in full violation of international norms and laws," said a statement by Bahrain's Foreign Ministry.

The statement added: "Bahrain affirms its solidarity with the decision taken by President Trump, noting its support for the efforts of the United States that aim to end terrorism at both the regional and international levels."

Israel also hailed Trump's move. "Donald Trump took a courageous decision to cancel the deal with Iran," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a televised statement.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin described the decision as a significant step in ensuring the security of Israel, the region and the entire free world.

The Emirates News Agency reported that the United Arab Emirates also "welcomed President Trump's strategy".

The UAE Foreign Ministry called on the international community and the other states that are party to the agreement to support Trump, the agency said.

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