**U.N. diplomat: Iran sanctions "not even nearing the end game"**

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The U.S. effort to secure U.N. support for sanctions against Iran stalled this week as the Iranian leader unveiled plans to travel to New York to challenge any U.N. agreement to constrain Tehran's nuclear program.

Last week, U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden voiced confidence that the United States would secure passage of a sanctions resolution by next week. "I believe you will see a sanction regime coming out by the end of this month, beginning of next month," Biden said Thursday on ABC's The View talk show.

But Security Council members said the U.S. and other big powers negotiating an Iran sanctions resolution "are not even nearing the end game," said a council diplomat. The official said that Iran negotiations would continue throughout May alongside a major review conference on the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The United States and its European allies are seeking passage of a resolution that would impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Tehran, restrict investment in Iran's energy sector, and authorize states to seize Iranian vessels suspected of ferrying banned weapons materials. U.S. and European officials had hoped to have concluded the talks before the nuclear conference begins on May 3.

The Iranian leader has requested a visa to travel to New York to attend the eighth review conference of the NPT, according to Susan E. Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. The Iranian president is expected to deliver a speech before the conference on Monday morning, while U.S. Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton is expected to address the gathering in the afternoon.

The permanent five members of the Security Council -- Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States -- plus Germany have been negotiating the text of a new sanctions resolution against Iran. The United States had hoped to conclude the negotiations on Iran sanctions before the start of the nuclear conference, fearing protracted discussions could undercut U.S. efforts to push for reforms on the treaty.

Rice told reporters outside the Security Council Wednesday that the key powers "are in very intensive discussions in New York and in capitals with our colleagues in the P5+1." She said she expected the council to adopt a sanctions resolution in the coming weeks.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told reporters at a luncheon that it would be "helpful" if the Iranian leader came to New York with some "constructive proposal to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue." But he said he is "unaware of any concrete ideas" he intended to unveil before the nuclear conference.

Ban said that the "onus" of assuring the international community that Tehran is not developing nuclear weapons rests on the Iranian leader. "The burden is on you," he said. "You have not satisfied the request of the international community" to demonstrate that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful.