

Iran: Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-President Josep Bo



Check against delivery!

I thank the European Parliament for its ongoing concern about the situation in Iran, including the recent worrying Human Rights related developments.

Iran is in the middle of a difficult period. The COVID-19 is affecting the country severely, with more than 3,000 new infections every day, nearing half a million in total, and at least 27,000 deaths. The COVID-19 crisis is further deepening Iran's existing economic difficulties. Following the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the so-called JCPOA, Iran had legitimate expectations that this "nuclear deal" would result in more concrete economic benefits.

Yet, after the regrettable US departure from the agreement and re-instatement of severe sanctions, the overall economic figures speak for themselves; the International Monetary Fund is predicting a 10% drop in GDP this year, [after a] 8,5 drop last year; unemployment is at 16%; [within the past year] the Iranian rial has lost almost half its value towards the US dollar; trade with the EU has decreased. In addition, Iran is experiencing shortages of important humanitarian items like personal protective equipment and medicine that could help in fighting COVID-19. There are severe shortages of all capacities to fight the COVID-19.

As European Union, we were quick to provide humanitarian support, with a [humanitarian] air bridge, and we keep strongly advocating – together with the UN Secretary General [António Guterres] that sanctions must not impede humanitarian trade. Together with European Union Member States we also keep looking at ways to encourage more legitimate trade between the EU and Iran, including through INSTEX [the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges]. But we need to do more.

These difficulties have also had a political impact in Iran, not least at the parliamentary election earlier this year; we have seen a strengthening of

those opposed to the nuclear deal, who are distrustful of the West and who do not support diplomacy and engagement. Together with our European and international partners, we are working hard to make sure that diplomacy with Iran continues to be possible.

We have also witnessed several deeply concerning human rights developments recently. This includes the treatment of Nasrin Sotoudeh and the many other political prisoners who remain imprisoned, whose health is at risk and should be released on humanitarian grounds, or at least have prompt access to medical assistance if they require it.

We also [condemned publicly the execution of Iranian wrestler Navid Afkari](#) and called on the Iranian authorities to investigate allegations that he was tortured in detention. We underline to all our partners, and not just Iran, that the perpetrators of such acts must be held accountable.

We continue to engage the Iranian authorities on their distressing practice of arbitrarily detaining European Union-Iranian dual nationals. We acknowledge the temporary release of French citizen Fariba Adelkhah, no individual should be used as a pawn and I want to once again urge the Iranian authorities to cease this policy.

Madam President, Honourable Members,

Let me finish with some remarks on the nuclear agreement. I want to be clear: As Coordinator – because the High Representative acts as coordinator of the JCPOA – I will continue to do everything possible to ensure the preservation and full implementation of the nuclear deal by all parties. Why is this so important? Because it is in our very own European security interest. And because the agreement continues to deliver. Without the nuclear deal, Iran could have developed a nuclear weapon by now with all the security implications for the region and beyond.

Of course, I am very concerned about Iran's reduced implementation of its JCPOA nuclear commitments following the US withdrawal from the agreement two years ago. And I do believe that full implementation of the nuclear deal by Iran and the other parties remains crucial to our efforts to preserve it.

However, we should not forget that even though the amount of nuclear material Iran possesses today is more than it had two years ago, it is still far less than the ten tons of enriched uranium that Iran possessed before the agreement. And we know that this is thanks to the JCPOA: Iran is the most monitored country in the world by the International Atomic Energy Agency, with now almost 400 inspections per year. If we were to lose the agreement, we would lose such critical information about the nuclear programme, too.

During recent weeks, a great amount of attention has been devoted to attempts by the United States to bring back the United Nations Iran sanctions. Here I want to be very clear also, once more: bringing back these sanctions would have meant the end of the JCPOA. 13 members of the Security Council, including all European members, rejected this approach and underlined the importance to keep the agreement in place – this way supporting the

understanding that the US is no longer part of the JCPOA because they freely decided to withdraw from it. They were also very clear that – after leaving the agreement in 2018 – the United States was not in a position to initiate the so-called ‘snap back’ process of bringing back United Nations sanctions under the UN Security Council resolution 2231. As JCPOA Coordinator, I thus want to re-iterate that all sanctions lifting commitments under the agreement remain in place.

I will personally continue to remain engaged on all of these issues, knowing that you are being criticized by both parts when you take this stance, and I count on the strong backing of this Parliament and the Council to promote a holistic approach to Iran that takes into account the different facets of our bilateral relationship. Engagement with Iran on all these issues remains in the European Union’s vital strategic interest, and that is why we are approaching the issue the way we do.

Thank you.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195823>

Closing remarks

Thank you President, it has been a busy morning. We have been here for 4 four hours and we are reaching the end of these intense debates about three very important issues. Many things have been said, I agree with many of them. And I could say exactly what Mr [Michael] Gahler has said at the end – the worst thing would be Iran becoming nuclear. Thanks to this [nuclear] deal, it is not nuclear. Other Members [of the European Parliament] have said the same thing, I cannot mention all of them.

To try to keep the JCPOA alive – although, as Mr [Reinhard] Bütikofer has said, it is very weak, it is not in a very good shape because the withdrawal of the US is something that jeopardises its existence and continuity. But to keep the JCPOA [alive] although in a reduced regime, is not contradictory with the importance that we have to give to the situation of human rights in Iran. I know that this is something that the entire Parliament is very much concerned with and I can assure you that we will continue working to put in front of the Iranian authorities our concerns, our rejection of the executions, and the tensions that have been mentioned here today. We will do that in close collaboration with the German Embassy in Tehran, which is currently acting as our local representation since we do not have a European Union Delegation on the ground.

And Mr Bütikofer is also right, we have to look further. Whatever is going to happen in the US after the next election... it is not sure that the JCPOA will resist. We have to look for a new agreement – is it possible? Remember how difficult it was to reach this agreement, how many years of tough work were required? To rebuild the agreement in order to adapt it to the new circumstances and even enlarging it would be good, if possible. It would depend very much on the political landscape in January next year.

In the meantime, about the arms embargo, I want to stress that we, Europeans,

will continue to keep our arms embargo in place. The comprehensive arms embargo of the European Union, not related to the JCPOA, will continue into 2023. But we cannot say that we fight to keep the JCPOA alive and at the same time impose an arms embargo related to the JCPOA itself. On that, I think we cannot share the position of the US, as did not 13 Members of the United Nations Security Council.

All in all, we are trying to do our best to increase our trade with Iran. It is very difficult because the American sanctions are very powerful, but the Iran deal is not just a nuclear deal – it is a nuclear deal on one side and an economic deal on the other. And one thing goes with the other. We cannot pretend [to ask] Iran to fulfil all the nuclear obligations if at the same time they do not get any kind of reward from the economic side. This is a delicate balance, and let us try to work on two things at the same time: the nuclear agreement and human rights. We continue fighting to keep the nuclear agreement alive and working, and at the same time, we will continue working to make the Iranian authorities aware that the respect of human rights is a sine qua non condition for us to engage with them.

And in both things I need the support of the European Parliament, for a realistic approach to one of the most important problems for our security. Because without the JCPOA, today Iran would be a nuclear power and then we would be in a completely different scenario, in a completely different situation. I think that this achievement of the European Diplomacy, – which took a lot [of] efforts from a lot of people, from Javier Solana [former High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary General of the Council of the European] to Ms Federica Mogherini [former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission], it deserves to be preserved. It deserves to be continued, to facilitate a non-nuclear Iran. And it gives us also leverage to engage with Iran on these other very important issues, such as human rights, that I know the Members of the [European] Parliament are very much attached to, as I am. You can count on the work of the European External Action Service engaging on these issues. The two of them can go in parallel, one thing does not prevent the other.

Thank you very much Members of the Parliament for your support and for this long and moving session.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195825>

Jordan: The EU Bank supports the implementation of the Municipal Energy

Efficiency Programme



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The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** and [Cities and Villages Development Bank \(CVDB\)](#) have signed a Technical Assistance cooperation agreement of EUR 1.4 million grant to support the implementation of the CVDB – Municipal Energy Efficiency Programme. The Programme is an important initiative that seeks to invest in [energy efficiency](#) across Jordanian Municipalities.

The advisory services are complementary to the EUR 45 million EIB [loan](#) provided to the CVDB in October last year. The services will include conducting needed technical studies, development of the pipeline of sub-projects of the programme and supporting its management. The project's pipeline will include sub-projects that improve municipal services buildings and lighting infrastructure throughout Jordan, the refurbishment and energy efficiency upgrade of public buildings and the installation of solar panel facilities on buildings, solar farms and public lighting investments.

The Bank's support to the project comes through a grant under the EIB's [Economic Resilience Initiative \(ERI\)](#), which is designed to strengthen EU Southern Neighbouring countries' ability to address key challenges. The Municipal Energy Efficiency Programme is in line with the current EU-Jordan partnership Priorities and Compact, especially the objectives of "a sustainable use and management of natural resources". The programme will contribute to the objective of developing energy efficiency and renewable energy investments to attain reduction of energy use by 20%, and improve contribution of renewables in electricity generation to 15%.

[Dario Scannapieco](#), Vice President of the Bank commented on the signature: "EIB, the Bank of the European Unions is a longstanding partner to Jordan. We

are happy to complement our financing to the Municipal Energy Efficiency Programme with advisory services to facilitate and support our Jordanian partners in the successful implementation of the programme.”

The EU’s Ambassador to Jordan, H.E. Maria Hadjitheodosiou, welcomed the continued cooperation between the EIB and the Cities and Villages Development Bank. She highlighted that the advisory services that will be provided via this cooperation agreement are fully aligned with and reinforce the EU’s partnership agreement with Jordan.

Osama Al-Azzam the DG of CVDB added that this grant will provide consultancy and Technical support services that will contribute to the implementation of the project in accordance with best practices and for the interest of Jordanian municipalities in order to reduce the electric energy bill and reduce the financial burdens on the municipalities.

[Jordan and the EIB](#)

[EIB in the region](#)

[Economic Resilience Initiative](#)

[EU-Japan joint naval exercise](#)



On 5-6 October, the European Union and Japan carried out a joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia. The exercise involved a warship supporting maritime patrol aircraft of [EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta](#) and a vessel of the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force patrolling the region against piracy. The exercise confirmed the commitment of the EU and Japan and the coordination between their respective forces in the fight against piracy.

The EU and Japan are committed to upholding the rules-based international order through practical maritime cooperation, including cooperation on

freedom of navigation and overflight, to secure sea-lanes of communication and to protect the global maritime domain against all types of threat, traditional and non-traditional. In this context, the EU and Japan reaffirm the universal and unified character of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. The EU and Japan are determined to pursue and enhance their cooperation on freedom of navigation and maritime security through future training initiatives and operational activities at sea. Furthermore, they stand ready to extend their lasting cooperation in this area so as to include also other partners in the Indian Ocean and in the Pacific region.

Factsheet on enhancing EU security cooperation in and with Asia:

<https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/63292/eu-asia-...>

Italy: EU backs MMI's Robotic System for Microsurgery



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MMI SpA, an Italian company dedicated to improving clinical outcomes for patients undergoing microsurgery, has signed a financing agreement with the European Investment Bank (EIB) granting access to up to €15 million (\$17.74

million), to be deployed over the coming years to support its long-term financial strategy. The EU bank's loan is backed by a guarantee from the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the main pillar of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#) under which the EIB and the European Commission are working together as strategic partners, with the EIB's financing operations boosting the competitiveness of the European economy.

EIB Director **Christoph Kuhn** said: *"Certain sectors are sometimes overlooked when we talk about 'Italian excellence', but surgical robotics definitely qualifies in that category. I am glad that, with backing from the Investment Plan for Europe, the EIB can get behind MMI to improve the lives of patients that need to have microsurgery. European knowledge and expertise need to be supported, especially in these economically difficult times, and the EU bank is here to do just that."*

European Commissioner for the Economy, **Paolo Gentiloni**, said: *"European companies have long been at the forefront of innovative solutions in the field of healthcare. Thanks to the backing of the European Fund for Strategic Investments, the EIB can support MMI SpA as it continues developing the next generation of microsurgical instruments to help patients undergoing surgery in the future."*

"We are pleased to have secured a loan instrument from the European Investment Bank and appreciate the vote of confidence in our company and innovative solutions from such a high-calibre institution. This agreement comes at an exciting time for our company. The resources will further strengthen our financial position in preparation for the commercial launch in Europe of our breakthrough robotic system aimed at improving the standard of care for patients undergoing microsurgical procedures", said **Gianluca Landi**, CFO of MMI SpA.

Background information

Medical Microinstruments S.p.A. (MMI) was founded in 2015 near Pisa, Italy to enhance surgical performance through the development of a robotic system that enables surgeons to achieve better outcomes on delicate microsurgical procedures. The MMI robotic platform combines proprietary innovations including the world's smallest wristed microinstruments as well as tremor-reducing and motion scaling technologies. Together, these powerful capabilities enable more surgeons to successfully perform microsurgery while expanding the field of supermicrosurgery. For more information, please visit: www.mmimicro.com

The **European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)** is the main pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe. It provides first-loss guarantees enabling the EIB to invest in more and often riskier projects. The projects and agreements approved for financing under the EFSI are expected to mobilise €514 billion in investment, supporting over 1.4 million start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises across the European Union. Total financing under EFSI in Italy since 2015 amounts to €12.5 billion and is set to trigger €79.4 billion in additional investments through co-financing with private and public partners.

Press release – EP Today



Main items on the agenda

Foreign Affairs debates with Josep Borrell

From 9.15, MEPs will debate with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell the hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the EU's diplomatic mission in Venezuela in view of possible elections and the situation in Iran.

You can follow the debate live on Parliament's [webstreaming](#) and on [EbS+](#)

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Changes in the European Commission

At 10.30, Parliament will decide on the appointment of Ms McGuinness as Commissioner in charge of Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Market and on the allocation of the Trade portfolio to Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis. The result of the vote will be announced at 14.15.

You can follow live on Parliament's [webstreaming](#) and on [EbS+](#).

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Wirecard scandal

In a debate at 15.00, MEPs will seek answers on how Wirecard, a German payment service-providing company, was able to operate without any inquiry into its actions, despite numerous signs of fraud, market manipulation as well as doubts about its accounting practices.

Capital Markets Union and digital finance

MEPs are set to call for simplified rules for SMEs and start-ups so that they can access financial markets and for a robust EU framework for digital finance to be set up, in a debate at around 15.45. The final results of the votes will be announced on Thursday at 16.30.

Press Conferences

At 10.00, rapporteur Jytte Guteland (S&D, Sweden) will hold a press conference on the European Climate Law. You can follow it live on Parliament's [webstreaming](#) and on [EbS+](#).

Votes

At **9.00**, the **results of votes on amendments** will be announced, among other things, on

- the **European Climate Law**, and
- the European Forest Strategy.

The **first voting session** lasts from **10.30 to 11:45**, with **final results** announced at **14.15**. MEPs will cast their final vote on

- the **appointment of Mairead McGuinness as Commissioner**,
- the **allocation of the Trade portfolio to Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis**,
- the **Establishment of an EU Mechanism on Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights**, and
- the Annual Report on Commercial Policy (2018).

The **second voting session** lasts from 17.15 until 18.30. **Results** will be announced on **Thursday** morning at **8.30**.

MEPs will cast their **final vote** on, among other things,

- the **European Climate Law**, and
- the European Forest Strategy.

During the second voting session **amendments** will be put to the vote, among other things, on

- the Resolution on the rule of law and fundamental rights in Bulgaria,

and

- the Capital Markets Union and digital finance.