

73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Annual General Debate
Address by H.E. Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President
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In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

“Praise be to God, the Lord of the universe and Peace and Blessings be upon the Messenger of God and his Family and Companions”

Madam President,

I take this opportunity to felicitate your election to the presidency of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We have assembled here today as the world is suffering from the recklessness and disregard of some states for international values and institutions. The message of our presence here is that the preservation of interests and security in the world in the least costly manner is solely possible through the cooperation of, and coordination among, countries. However, it is unfortunate that we are witnessing rulers in the world who think they can secure their interests better—or at least in the short-term ride public sentiments and gain popular support—through the fomenting of extremist nationalism and racism, and through xenophobic tendencies resembling a Nazi disposition, as well as through the trampling of global rules and undermining international institutions; even through preposterous and abnormal acts such as convening a high-level meeting of the Security Council.

This illusion should be cast away, once and for all, that one can aspire to securing more peace and security at the cost of denying others’ peace and security. We should not allow the breathing space for and growth of the line of thinking that holds others to ransom through the artificial creation of insecurity. Along this tack, confronting multilateralism is not a sign of strength; rather it is a symptom of the weakness of intellect—it betrays an inability in understanding a complex and interconnected world.

Under such circumstances, negligence or inefficacy of international institutions can endanger world peace. Those seeking dominance and hegemony are enemies of peace and the perpetrators of war.

The government of the United States—at least the current administration—seems determined to render all international institutions ineffectual. This government, having withdrawn from a multilateral agreement adopted by the Security Council, in contravention of the rules and norms of international law, invites the Islamic Republic of Iran to bilateral talks. An administration that is inviting Iran to engage in talks is not ready to consult its own experts nor willing to recognize

the requirements of a modern state, including the paramount principle of continuity of state responsibility, and hence openly violates state obligations undertaken by its predecessor.

On what basis and criteria can we enter into an agreement with an administration misbehaving such as this? Any talks should be within the framework and in continuation of the JCPOA and Security Council resolution 2231, and not in a framework of breaching them and reverting to the past. It is ironic that the US government does not even conceal its plan for overthrowing the same government it invites to talks!

Distinguished Colleagues,

The approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of foreign policy has been based on multilateralism and compliance with the recognized principles of international law. Our respect for the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the long and difficult negotiations with the Group of 5+1, which led to the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—the JCPOA—illustrates a clear manifestation of this approach.

We are pleased that the international community did not acquiesce to the US government's unilateral and illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA and adopted a categorical position vis-à-vis that decision. The JCPOA is the outcome of more than a decade of diplomatic efforts and a period of intensive negotiations to resolve an artificial crisis. This document was unanimously approved by Security Council resolution 2231 and codified into an international obligation. According to this resolution, all countries and international and regional organizations were called upon to support the implementation of the JCPOA, and to refrain from any actions that undermine implementation of commitments under the JCPOA.

Based on 12 consecutive reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency – the IAEA – Iran has thus far complied with all of its commitments. However, the United States, from the very beginning, never remained faithful to its obligations. Later, the current administration, resorting to flimsy excuses and in open violation of its commitments, finally withdrew from the accord. The United Nations should not allow its decisions to fall victim to the domestic election and propaganda games of some of its members and should not allow any Member State to dodge the execution of its international commitments.

Additionally, the United States also pressures other countries to violate the nuclear accord. And more dangerously, the United States is threatening all countries and international organizations with punishment if they comply with Security Council resolution 2231. It is the first time in the history of the United Nations that such 'a general invitation to violation of law' is coupled with 'threatening law-abiders with punishment.' This is not just peculiar to the JCPOA, but a pattern that even applies to the US approach to the International Criminal Court.

We appreciate the efforts of the international community, the European Union, Russia, and China in supporting the implementation of the JCPOA and consider the full realization of the commitments stipulated in it a precondition for the survival of this significant accomplishment of diplomacy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Unlawful unilateral sanctions in themselves constitute a form of economic terrorism and a breach of the 'Right to Development.' The economic war that the United States has initiated under the rubric of new sanctions not only targets the Iranian people but also entails harmful repercussions for the people of other countries, and that war has caused a disruption in the state of global trade.

The Iranian people have demonstrated their unwavering resilience during the past forty years despite the difficulties and constraints caused by sanctions and have shown that they can overcome this difficult phase as well. The multi-millennial history of our country demonstrates that Iran and Iranians have never broken in the face of a storm of events—not even been bowed. I state here, in clear, unambiguous terms, that the United States policy vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran has been wrong from the beginning, and its approach of resisting the wishes of the Iranian people as manifested in numerous elections is doomed to failure. Iran, with its historical and civilizational longevity, rich cultural heritage, and foremost geopolitical position, is an undeniable reality. The policy of engagement and cooperation with Iran has produced positive outcomes for other nations, as best reflected in Iran's cooperation with friendly countries in the fight against terrorism.

The United States' understanding of international relations is authoritarian. In its estimation, might makes right. Its understanding of power, not of legal and legitimate authority, is reflected in bullying and imposition. No state and nation can be brought to the negotiating table by force, and if so, what follows is the accumulation in the 'grapes of wrath' of those nations, to be reaped later by the oppressors.

We concur that, at the end of the day, there is no better way but dialogue. However, dialogue is two-way: it should be based on equality, justice, and human integrity and honor, and conducted in accordance with the rules and norms of international law. UN Security Council resolution 2231 is not a 'piece of paper'. We invite you to return to that Council resolution. We invite you to come back to the negotiating table you left. If you dislike the JCPOA because it is the legacy of your domestic political rivals, then we invite you to come back to the Security Council resolution. We invite you to remain in the international institutions. Do not engage in imposing sanctions. Sanctions and extremism are two sides of the same coin: Extremism involves negating the thinking of others, and sanctions negate the life and prosperity of people.

For dialogue to take place, there is no need for a photo opportunity. The two sides can listen to each other right here in this Assembly. I am starting the dialogue right here, and state—in unequivocal terms—that the question of international security is not a toy in American domestic politics. The United Nations is not a part of the United States administration. Dialogue can resume in this Assembly from the same point and by the same person who left the dialogue table and walked away from the accord. Beginning the dialogue starts with ending threats and unjust sanctions that negate the principles of ethics and international law.

Our proposal is clear: commitment for commitment; violation for violation; threat for threat; and step for step, instead of talk for talk.

What Iran says is clear: no war, no sanctions, no threats, no bullying; just acting according to the law and the fulfillment of obligations. We support peace and democracy in the entire Middle East. We consider nuclear knowledge an imperative and nuclear weapons prohibited.

As victims of terrorism in the past and today, we have always been and will always remain in the forefront of genuine confrontation with terrorism. Today, we mourn the martyrdom of tens of innocent people, who were recently murdered in cold blood by terrorists who shamelessly accepted responsibility from a number of Western capitals for their heinous crime in interviews with some Western-based broadcasting outfits that are financed by petrodollars. In Iran we have condemned all acts of terrorism without equivocation and will continue to do so. We welcome the strong statement from the Security Council on this issue. But why can the leaders of these terrorist operations – including the organization that has publicly claimed responsibility for Saturday’s crime—live and operate freely in Western countries, and even openly solicit funds? Are these activities not in violation of international counter-terrorism norms? Why have the official State-financiers of anti-Iranian terrorist organizations –with their record of financing Al-Qaeda, ISIS and al Nusrah—not only been spared any punishment but are supported and armed? If you want the world public to take your claim of fighting terrorism seriously, it is imperative to start a joint global campaign to fight this scourge, irrespective of the victims or culprits.

Distinguished Colleagues,

In the same vein, from the very beginning of the crisis in Syria, we have warned against any foreign intervention in the internal affairs of this country and the use of unlawful means, including supporting extremist and terrorist groups in order to exert pressure on the government of Syria, and have *consistently* emphasized that the crisis can only be resolved through intra-Syrian dialogue. To this end, the presence of our military advisors in Syria has been at the request of the Syrian government and consistent with international law and has aimed at assisting the Syrian government in combatting extremist terrorism. Iran, Russia, and Turkey, in cooperation with the government of Syria and other Syrian parties, have succeeded through the Astana Process, the third summit meeting of which took place in Tehran earlier this month, in playing a positive role in reducing tension in Syria, and in their last common effort have prevented escalation and bloodshed in the Idlib region.

We have witnessed a tragic humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen over the past three years which has caused the destruction of infrastructure, the killing and injury of hundreds of thousands, the displacement of millions of innocent people, and the occurrence of widespread famine and chronic diseases. These inhuman acts represent clear examples of crimes against humanity and war crimes. The crisis in Yemen can be resolved solely through intra-Yemeni talks and without foreign interference. And to this end, we are ready to assist in any possible way.

The most pressing crisis in the Middle East, however, is the question of Palestine. The passage of time cannot – and must not –justify occupation. The innumerable crimes of Israel against the Palestinians would not have been possible without the material and military assistance, and political and propaganda support of the United States. Israel, equipped with a nuclear arsenal and

blatantly threatening others with nuclear annihilation, presents the most daunting threat to regional and global peace and stability.

The abhorrent U.S. decision to transfer its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, and the recent enactment of the racist Jewish State law are violations of international law and norms, and unmistakable manifestations of apartheid.

Madam President,

The expansion of relations with neighbors and the creation of a more secure and more developed region are among the main priorities of Iran's foreign policy. A few weeks ago Iran, along with the other four coastal states, signed the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, which will strengthen good-neighborliness and bring prosperity and progress for all of the coastal states. We also desire the same relations with our southern neighbors in the Persian Gulf. We believe in the formation of a collective mechanism for the Persian Gulf region with the presence and participation of all regional countries. The security of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz has always been important for us, and just as we defended this security during the war imposed on us by Iraq, we will confront any and all disruptive efforts in this critical waterway in the future.

We espouse a peaceful view in political and international issues and have not sought, nor do we seek, war with any country. Iran does not need an empire. Iran is an empire in terms of its civilization and its culture; not through political domination.

Iran has served as the link between east and west and will continue to do so; remaining a meticulous guardian for a world free from violence.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the same state that understood the fascistic nature of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq before anyone else in the world, and bravely resisted its aggression against us. We fought against the Ba'ath Party of Iraq *before* Kuwait was occupied by it.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the same state that was on the forefront of the struggle against Taliban terrorism, and gave up martyrs in that struggle. We fought against Al-Qaida and the Taliban *before* the attacks on New York and Washington.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the same state that fought against Daesh – a fake, distorted representation of Islam. We were engaged in the fight against Daesh *before* their operations in Paris, London and Brussels.

Appreciate these historical realities about Iran. Quit imposing sanctions and end extremism. The world will not have a better friend than Iran, if peace is what you seek.

I thank you for your attention.
