



Security Council

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Letter dated 26 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you with reference to the letters contained in documents [S/2020/138](#) and [S/2020/428](#), as well as the letter contained in document [S/2020/382](#).

As usual, futile attempts have been made to link, deceptively, the launch by the Islamic Republic of Iran of two space launch vehicles to paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), in order to make an arbitrary interpretation thereof and, consequently, to draw an arbitrary conclusion with regard to the implementation of that paragraph and the resolution itself.

Contrary to the claims made in the above-mentioned letters, paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), which calls upon Iran “not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology”, does not concern the space launch vehicles for a number of reasons: firstly, there is no explicit reference to “space launch vehicles” therein; secondly, space launch vehicles do not incorporate technologies identical to “ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons”; thirdly, space launch vehicles, which are exclusively designed to place satellites into orbit, are not “designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons”; and fourthly, space launch vehicles are not capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

Likewise, in contrast to the arguments made in those letters, the launch of two space launch vehicles by Iran is, in no way, covered by, or inconsistent with, paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). They are space launch vehicles, not “ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons”; do not use technologies identical to “ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons”; and are not capable of delivering nuclear weapons. It is also worth recalling that, when the launch of a space launch vehicle by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2017 was discussed in the Security Council, “there was no consensus on how this particular launch related to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#)” (see [S/2017/1058](#)).

Furthermore, in an arbitrary interpretation of the phrase “designed to be capable” in paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), the negotiating history and the *raison d’être* of that phrase have deliberately been disregarded. The addition of the phrase “designed to be” to the wording “capable of delivering nuclear weapons” used in the already terminated Security Council resolution [1929 \(2010\)](#) was a deliberate modification following lengthy negotiations in order to exclude Iran’s defensive missile programme that is “designed” to be exclusively capable of



delivering conventional warheads. Accordingly, the missile programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran falls outside the purview or competence of the Security Council resolution and its annexes (see [S/2015/550](#)), as does its space programme, including the launch of two space launch vehicles.

Expectedly, in arbitrary reinterpretation of paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), once again, the definitions of the Missile Technology Control Regime – an exclusive “informal political understanding” among only 35 States – were invoked. There is no implicit or explicit reference in that paragraph either to the Missile Technology Control Regime itself or to its definitions and, thus, any reference thereto is totally misleading. Moreover, while the Missile Technology Control Regime criteria are not legally binding, even for its members, any attempt to portray them as the universally agreed definition is suspicious. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General ([A/57/229](#)), “there is no universally accepted norm or instrument specifically governing the development, testing, production, acquisition, transfer, deployment or use of missiles”.

In this context, we warn against the politically motivated approach by the United States and certain other developed countries with space programmes, who, under absurd pretexts like proliferation concerns, attempt to demonize the use of space technology for peaceful purposes by developing countries. This hypocritical approach seriously runs the risk of endangering the exercise of the inherent right of States to access to space and celestial bodies, their freedom in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, as well as their free access to space science, technologies and their applications without discrimination of any kind.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, like any other State, enjoys the right to the peaceful use of outer space, and its space programme comprises scientific and technological activities related to the peaceful uses of outer space in such areas as disaster management, environmental monitoring and natural resource management, communication, human health, food security and sustainable agriculture, which are common features and requirements of the socioeconomic development of every society. Accordingly, the launch of two space launch vehicles by Iran, irrespective of the organizations involved, is in full conformity with international law, as well as Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).

Surprisingly, the United States has again claimed that resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) prohibits the supply, sale or transfer to Iran of certain ballistic missile-related items, materials, equipment, goods and technology. Contrary to that claim, the resolution has generally authorized such activities, stating that “all States may participate in and permit” “the supply, sale or transfer” of such items “to or from Iran”. Therefore, it is crystal clear that all States can conduct such activities in the first place. They merely need to inform the Security Council in advance, which shall decide “on a case-by-case basis to permit such activity”.

Nevertheless, to date, the United States and certain Western members of the Security Council, for clear political reasons, have prevented the Council from making the necessary decisions to permit such activities, which are essential for the full and effective implementation of the very same resolution. Similarly, the unlawful United States sanctions in violation of resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) have prevented the implementation of those provisions. In this context, I underline our concerns, including those contained in my letter dated 18 December 2019 ([S/2019/959](#)). Iran also unequivocally refutes the allegation that it has attempted “to procure missile-usable equipment and technology in violation of resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#)”.

In light of the above, while categorically rejecting all the allegations made by the United States as well as condemning its desperate attempt to portray Iran’s missile and spaces programmes as undermining “the fundamental credibility of the Council”,

the Islamic Republic of Iran stresses that what indeed continues to undermine the credibility of the United Nations, the Security Council and international law is that the United States, as the Council's permanent member, not only continues to systematically violate resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), but also is brazenly forcing other States to either defy that resolution or face punishment.

With regard to other claims contained in document [S/2020/382](#), I must stress that the allegations by the representative of the Israeli regime regarding the so-called violation of Security Council resolutions [2231 \(2015\)](#), [1970 \(2011\)](#) and [2473 \(2019\)](#) by the Islamic Republic of Iran are totally baseless and hereby categorically rejected. Such claims are made by a regime which ranks first in systematic and gross violation of not only tens of binding resolutions of the Security Council as well as the peremptory norms and cardinal principles of international law, but also repeated commission of all four core international crimes over the past seven decades.

It is also ironic that the Israeli regime, which is shamelessly threatening regional countries with nuclear weapons, possesses different types of weapons of mass destruction while refusing to join international legally binding instruments banning such weapons, particularly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, now cries wolf and accuses Iran of the so-called violation of resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). It is also hypocritical, since this regime itself has spared no efforts and missed no opportunities to violate that resolution, as well as numerous other resolutions of the Council (see [S/2017/205](#)), including resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#), [1701 \(2006\)](#), [2254 \(2015\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#). Therefore, the international community, the United Nations and the Security Council must be fully vigilant about all destabilizing policies and unlawful practices of this regime in such a volatile region as the Middle East and the ramifications for international peace and security and thus hold it accountable for all such inhumane policies and brutal and unlawful practices.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Majid Takht Ravanchi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative