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From left, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov Sergey Alexeevich, Deputy Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi hold a press conference after their meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on March 14, 2025. Photo: Visual News

▶ Beijing proposes 5 points on proper settlement, rejects sanctions, use of force

# China, Russia, Iran endorse dialogue for nuclear solution

By Chen Qingqing

China, Russia and Iran issued a joint statement on Friday, reaffirming that political and diplomatic engagement and dialogue remains the only viable and practical option for the Iranian nuclear issue after deputy foreign ministers of the three nations held a meeting in Beijing on Friday.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, met with the heads of delegations to the meeting and put forward China's five-point proposal on the Iranian nuclear issue, including staying committed to peaceful settlement of disputes through political and

diplomatic means, and opposing the use of force and illegal sanctions.

Ma Zhaoxu, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, told reporters after the meeting that the three sides emphasized the necessity of terminating all illegal unilateral sanctions. Relevant parties should work to eliminate the root causes of the current situation and abandon sanctions,

pressure, and threats of the use of force.

The trilateral meeting was held against the backdrop of the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 and the continued maximum pressure on Iran by the Trump administration. Amid the US' unilateral actions, the original framework under

## US envoy to relay Putin's stance after meeting in Moscow

By Wang Qi

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with US envoy Steve Witkoff late Thursday to discuss the details of an American-proposed 30-day cease-fire in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, asking him to relay Moscow's perspectives to Washington, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov announced on Friday, the Associated Press (AP) reported. This follows Putin's remarks Thursday that Russia is "in favor" of the 30-day cease-fire plan proposed by the US and Ukraine, but nuances exist.

Peskov indicated that a potential phone call between Putin and US President Donald Trump to address unresolved cease-fire issues could be arranged once Witkoff delivers Moscow's messages to Washington, according to AP.

Witkoff landed in Moscow for talks and presented the cease-fire plan on Thursday. The cease-fire proposal gained traction earlier this week when Ukraine, following talks with a US delegation in Jeddah, expressed support for an "immediate, interim 30-day cease-fire," according to a joint statement released on Tuesday.

Speaking at a press conference alongside Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Putin remarked, "We agree with the proposals to stop hostilities, but we proceed from the fact that this cessation should be one that would lead to long-term peace and eliminate the original causes of this crisis," according to the Xinhua News Agency.

Putin also indicated that he might call Trump to discuss the issue, adding that

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US

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## Surging gold prices



The price of gold is displayed on a large screen outside a building in Shanghai's Jing'an district on March 14, 2025, as gold prices recently hit new record highs. Spot gold hit a record \$3,004.86 per ounce on March 14, marking its thirteenth all-time high in 2025. (See story on Page 5) Photo: IC

## Evolving battlefield dynamics complicate cease-fire plan as mixed reactions emerge: expert

► US, from Page 1

Russia will negotiate the next steps to end the conflict and reach acceptable agreements based on the situation "on the ground," per Xinhua.

Wan Qingsong, an expert at the Center for Russian Studies at East China Normal University, told the Global Times that Putin's statement continues Russia's previously expressed openness to peace talks while reaffirming that any negotiations must address the root causes of the conflict. Furthermore, Putin is also signaling an intent to sustain the thawing momentum of Russia-US relations that has already begun.

### Mixed reactions

US President Donald Trump said on social media Friday that "We had very good and productive discussions with President Vladimir Putin of Russia yesterday," and there is a very good chance that "this horrible, bloody war" can finally come to an end.

Trump said earlier that there have been "good signals" coming out of Russia. Speaking at the White House alongside NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Trump said, "Putin put out a very promising statement, but it wasn't complete," the AP reported.

However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky struck a "pessimistic tone" in his evening address to Ukrainians on Thursday, the New York Times said. Zelensky said Putin's response to the cease-fire proposal was "very predictable." He added that Putin has set so many preconditions "that nothing will work out at all, or that it will not work out for as long as possible," according to the media report.

Li Haidong, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University, told the Global Times that all parties are exercising diplomatic flexibility to signal to their domestic populations and the international community that they are not the ones impeding peace or exacerbating the conflict.

Nevertheless, their reactions also underscore profound disagreements over arrangements for enduring security, presenting formidable obstacles to a comprehensive resolution of the Ukraine crisis, Li said.

Li noted the peace plan put forward by the US does not adequately account for the demands of all stakeholders. The cease-fire proposal, laden with temporary measures, lacks the foundation for long-term stability, raising the risk of a superficial "cease-fire for cease-fire's sake."

According to Wan, the parties involved may still be engaged in a phase of mutual probing. "Within the US-Ukraine joint statement issued Tuesday, the US pledge to resume military aid and intelligence sharing to Ukraine stands in apparent contradiction to the very objective of securing a cease-fire."

As the US envoy landed in Moscow on Thursday for talks on an American-proposed 30-day cease-fire, Russia's Defense Ministry announced the same day that its forces had retaken the key town of Sudzha in Ukraine-held Kursk region, following President Putin's visit to Kursk.

Territorial issues will clearly influence whether peace negotiations can achieve substantive progress, noted Wan, adding that as Russia gains the upper hand on the battlefield, its demands are likely to escalate, leaving less room for compromise, rather than merely accommodating US' preferences.

## US urged to demonstrate political sincerity, return to dialogue early

► China, from Page 1

the UN reached between Iran and other permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) plus Germany has been unable to function effectively. Therefore, China, Russia, and Iran are exploring new mechanisms to prevent further deterioration of the Iranian nuclear issue and to seek a diplomatic resolution, experts said.

### China's efforts

Among the five-point proposal on the Iranian nuclear issue, China stays committed to balancing rights and responsibilities, and takes a holistic approach to the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, according to Wang.

China stays committed to the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as the basis for new consensus. China hopes that all parties will work toward the same direction and resume dialogue and negotiation as early as possible. The US should demonstrate political sincerity and return to talks at an early date, Wang said.

Wang noted China stays committed to a step-by-step and reciprocal approach, and seek consensus through consultation. History has proven that acting from a position of strength would not lead to the key to resolving difficult issues.

The trilateral meeting came days after Tehran spurned US "orders" to resume dialogue over the nuclear program, Reuters reported on Friday.

Last week, US President Donald Trump said he had sent a letter to Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei proposing nuclear talks,

adding that "there are two ways Iran can be handled: militarily, or you make a deal," according to Reuters.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian responded that he would not negotiate with the US while being "threatened", and Iran would not bow to US "orders" to talk.

The Trump administration imposed a "maximum pressure" policy on Iran in February that includes efforts to drive its oil exports to zero in order to stop Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and funding militant groups, Reuters said.

Liu Zhongmin, a professor from the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, said that the latest China-Russia-Iran dialogue is currently just the beginning, noting that the meeting could be seen as part of damage-control measures, aimed at preventing the Iranian nuclear issue from escalating further.

There are essentially two approaches to resolving it, said Sun Degang, director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Fudan University. One approach is the US strategy, which relies on extreme pressure, as seen during the Trump administration following the US withdrawal from the agreement. This led Iran to accelerate its uranium enrichment process, increasing the risk of nuclear proliferation.

"However, another approach is the multilateral diplomatic resolution, which proved effective in the original Iran nuclear agreement a decade ago," Sun said, noting that China played a key role in that process, where all parties engaged in dialogue, sought common ground while setting aside differences, and ultimately reached a consensus on

the nuclear deal.

### Role of multilateral platforms

In the joint statement issued after the China-Russia-Iran meeting on Friday, the three countries agreed to continue their close consultation and cooperation in the future.

The three countries also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest, and agreed to maintain and strengthen their coordination in international organizations and multilateral arrangements such as BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Iran's foreign ministry on Thursday summoned the envoys of Britain, France and Germany over what it called a "misuse of the UNSC to hold a closed-door meeting," Reuters reported citing Iranian state media. The UNSC met behind closed doors on Wednesday over Tehran's nuclear program. The meeting called by six of the council's 15 members – the US, France, Greece, Panama, South Korea and Britain, came at Washington's request, according to the report.

The US has made some unrealistic demands, driven by its own interests, regarding global hotspot issues including the Iranian nuclear issue, which has led to the destruction of the original consensus, foundation, and mechanisms surrounding these already complex international hotspot issues, Liu noted.

"In this context, the international community faces the challenge of seeking new solutions and approaches, and must not allow the US' unilateral actions to undermine all the consensus and mechanisms regarding international hotspot issues," Liu said.