

03 May 2010 - NPT Review Conference – Iran – Interview with Mr. Eric Danon, Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, for France 24

Q: The NPT Review Conference is being held at the United Nations, bringing together 189 States in New York. The Conference focuses on disarmament and the strengthening of the nuclear surveillance programs throughout the world. The Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gave a speech a short while ago at the United Nations podium; France, the United States, and the United Kingdom boycotted this speech. The delegations of these three countries got up and walked out.

Eric Danon, good evening. You are the head of the French delegation; you are France's Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Why did this boycott occur? What is France's message to Iran today?

This is the usual message that we give to Iran when it takes a provocative approach.

I would firstly like to point out that we are not the only ones, far from it, to have walked out, since in addition to the Americans, the British and ourselves, the Germans, the Italians, the Czechs, the Austrians, the Dutch and the Belgians all walked out as well. So this is a much more collective message, and many other countries that are not in the European Union, ranging from Australia to Morocco, also walked out.

We do not accept that the Iranian president continues to demonstrate this provocative attitude towards the international community. He began by saying at the start of the speech that Iran was in complete compliance with the demands of the IAEA in Vienna, which is obviously not the case, as which the Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon had reaffirmed just before. He also developed a number of pseudo proposals which do not correspond to today's situation at all and which don't contain any real truth: the suspension for example of the presence of the representatives of the nuclear-weapon States at the Agency in Vienna, or the prohibition of all forms of cooperation with States that are not members of the NPT like Israel, India or Pakistan: all that was completely unrealistic. Furthermore, he dwelled, as usual, on the problems of the Middle East in a way that obviously does not correspond to reality and was at times unacceptable. That is the reason for our walkout.

Q: A collective walkout, a symbolic gesture – what is the status of the sanctions, since today this was a boycott; today isn't the first time that France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the other countries you mentioned have boycotted Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech. Beyond the boycott, when will sanctions be applied? There has been talk of sanctions for months and months, but nothing happens.

This is a gradual process, there are successive phases. Work is being done on the additional sanctions, but Iran has been subject to sanctions for a long time.

Q: Let's talk about the additional sanctions. We have been talking about them for months and for now, there is no consensus between the major powers.

It's simply because each time the transition to the next stage takes time and must be very carefully examined. I want to point out that Russia and then China very gradually came to the conclusion that additional sanctions were necessary. We are now discussing the modalities.