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Rt Hon. David Miliband MP
Secretary of State
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
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17 September 2007

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am writing to you as Chair of the United Nations Association of the UK to express our deep concern about the apparent stalling of the effort to find a diplomatic solution to the problems arising from Iran's nuclear programme. We strongly support the work of the EU-3 (France, Germany and Britain) over recent years, and the contribution this has made to building up a united front at the UN to press for the suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment activities.

We do feel, however, that, in addition to Iran's refusal to comply with the Security Council resolutions calling for the suspension of enrichment, there is one other major element missing from a successful international strategy: that is the lack of a dialogue between Iran and the main Security Council powers over the whole range of Iranian and others' security concerns. Experience in dealing with North Korea has demonstrated that a dialogue of this sort, in which the United States plays a direct role, is essential if progress is to be made. But in North Korea's case the engagement in such a dialogue was not made dependent on any precondition required of the North Korean government. In the light of that experience the time has surely come now to make an offer of such an unconditional dialogue to Iran.

We understand that serious consideration is now being given to a new Security Council resolution tightening the UN sanctions against Iran. Would it not greatly strengthen the chances of achieving unanimity for such a resolution if the United States were to make it clear that it would thereafter engage in such a dialogue without preconditions? We hope that you would now give serious consideration to urging such a course on the US administration.

We do not underestimate the difficulty of persuading Iran to comply with the Security Council resolutions. But the imperative to pursue this matter through peaceful, negotiated means would seem to point firmly towards a new diplomatic initiative.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick
Chair, UNA-UK