

EU leaders push back against Trump on Iran nuclear deal

Bloc affirms support for pact despite US administrations refusal to certify compliance; IAEA head says inspections of sites continuing unabated.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel, left, Britain Prime minister Theresa May, center, and French President Emmanuel Macron talk as they arrive in Brussels, on October 19, 2017.(AFP/JOHN THYS)

BRUSSELS (AP) — The leaders of the 28 members of the European Union showed their support for the Iran nuclear agreement Thursday, despite US President Donald Trump's opposition to it.

EU spokesman Preben Aaman tweeted that the EU leaders agreed at a summit Thursday to show their joint commitment to the international agreement curbing Iran's nuclear program.

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The EU leaders called the 2015 deal a pillar of efforts to reduce the global nuclear threat. Some fear that walking away from the deal could compromise chances of

encouraging North Korea to negotiate on its nuclear program.

Trump “decertified” the deal Friday, angrily accusing Iran of violating it, and directed the US Congress to make it more stringent.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has certified eight times that Iran was living up to its commitments.

Earlier in the day, France reaffirmed its support for the nuke deal after French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves le Drian met with IAEA head Yukiya Amano.

The deal “remains valid despite the decision of the president of the United States not to certify its implementation,” Le Drian said a meeting in Paris with Amano,

Amano said inspections in Iran were continuing.

“We didn’t have enough time yet to observe the attitude of Iran,” Amano said. “Yet I can tell you the Iranians are very careful and we continue our controls and inspections without any problem.”



French President Emmanuel Macron, left, welcomes Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, Yukiya Amano for a meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France on October 19, 2017. (AP/Michel Euler)

Amano also met with French President Emmanuel Macron, who encouraged the IAEA to ensure strict adherence to the deal “in all its aspects.”

They also discussed the “serious and difficult” North Korea issue, according to Amano.

On Wednesday, US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley called on the international community to join the US in adopting the Trump administration’s comprehensive approach to Iran addressing all aspects of its “destructive conduct” — not just the 2015 nuclear deal.

She told the Security Council that Iran “has repeatedly thumbed its nose” at council resolutions aimed at addressing Iranian support for terrorism and regional conflicts and has illegally supplied weapons to Yemen and Hezbollah militants in Syria and Lebanon.



United States ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, center, raises her hand as she votes yes to levy new sanctions on North Korea during a meeting of the United Nations Security Council concerning North Korea at UN headquarters, in New York City, September 11, 2017. (Drew Angerer/Getty Images/AFP)

“Worse, the regime continues to play this council,” Haley said. “Iran hides behind its assertion of technical compliance with the nuclear deal while it brazenly violates the other limits of its behavior, and we have allowed them to get away with it.”

“Judging Iran by the narrow confines of the nuclear deal misses the true nature of

the threat,” Haley stressed. “Iran must be judged in totality of its aggressive, destabilizing and unlawful behavior. To do otherwise would be foolish.”



US President Donald Trump and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speak during a meeting on United Nations reform at the UN headquarters in New York, September 18, 2017. (AFP Photo/Timothy A. Clary)

On Friday, Trump is scheduled to meet with UN head Antonio Guterres at the White House, where the Iran deal is expected to be on the agenda.

Guterres this week spoke out in defense of the nuclear deal, describing the 2015 agreement as “essential” and “something that needs to be preserved.”

It will be the UN chief’s first full formal meeting with Trump at the White House after a brief encounter with the US president in April.

AFP contributed to this report.

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