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Embassy Spokesperson's Remarks on AUKUS Nuclear Submarine Cooperation (2)

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Message from Ambassador

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Question: Why does the nuclear submarine cooperation between the US, the UK and Australia pose nuclear proliferation risks?

Embassy Spokesperson: The vehement push for nuclear submarine cooperation by the US, the UK and Australia, a small bloc composed of Anglo-Saxon nations, exposes the three countries' double standard and hypocrisy on nuclear non-proliferation. China has made clear its severe concern and firm opposition to it.

The US and the UK tell the world that they uphold the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). They worked to put strict restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), limiting Iran's uranium stockpile to 300 kilograms at a maximum enrichment level of 3.67%. However, the AUKUS nuclear submarine cooperation involves the transfer of tonnes of weapons-grade highly enriched uranium of over 90% purity from the US and the UK, both nuclear weapon states, to Australia, a non-nuclear weapon state, placing large amounts of weapons-grade nuclear material beyond the effective reach of the international safeguards system. This contravenes the object and purpose of the NPT, and the nuclear proliferation risks here are only too obvious.

The AUKUS nuclear submarine cooperation marks the first time for nuclear weapon states to transfer naval nuclear propulsion reactors and weapons-grade highly enriched uranium to a non-nuclear weapon state. There is nothing in the current International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system that can ensure effective safeguards. Therefore, such cooperation poses serious nuclear proliferation risks, seriously compromises the authority of the IAEA, and deals a blow to the Agency's safeguards system. If the three countries are set on advancing the cooperation, other countries will likely follow suit, eventually leading to the collapse of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We urge the US, the UK and Australia to earnestly fulfil their international obligations, change course, stop putting their selfish geopolitical agenda above nuclear non-proliferation obligations, not to unlock Pandora's box on nuclear proliferation, and refrain from creating new grave threats to regional and world peace and stability.

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