

No sign Iran seeks nuclear arms: new IAEA head

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, July 06, 2009

[Reuters](#) 3 July 2009

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

The incoming head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog said on Friday he did not see any hard evidence [Iran](#) was trying to gain the ability to develop nuclear arms.

"I don't see any evidence in IAEA official documents about this," Yukiya Amano told Reuters in his first direct comment on [Iran](#)'s atomic program since his election, when asked whether he believed Tehran was seeking nuclear weapons capability.

Current International Atomic Energy Agency head Mohamed ElBaradei said last month it was his "gut feeling" [Iran](#) was seeking the ability to produce nuclear arms, if it desired, as an "insurance policy" against perceived threats.

"I'm not going to be a "soft" Director-General or a "tough" Director-General," Amano told Reuters, when asked how he would approach [Iran](#) and Syria, both subject to stalled IAEA probes.

Amano, a veteran Japanese diplomat, won over the agency's member states on Friday, including developing countries which had tried to thwart his bid for the politically-sensitive post.

Amano is regarded as a reserved technocrat who would de-politicize the IAEA helm after 12 years of direction by ElBaradei, an outspoken Nobel Peace laureate. He retires in November.

Diplomats say the IAEA cannot afford weak leadership or a governing body polarized between nuclear "have" and "have not" nations at a time of danger to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Amano was only narrowly elected as Director-General on Thursday, but the win was sealed by acclamation at a closed-door meeting of the IAEA's 146 members on Friday.

INDEPENDENCE

"The Director-General of the agency is an independent person. I will continue to be independent from any group, any region," Amano told reporters after the meeting.

Amano got the strongest backing from Western states keen for the IAEA to toughen steps against the spread of nuclear arms. But his rise has worried developing nations who see the non-proliferation maxim being used as an excuse to deny them a fair share of nuclear know-how.

[Iran](#) has exploited such tensions, winning sympathy in the developing world, by arguing that

to stop uranium enrichment as major world powers demand would violate its sovereignty, stunt its energy development and perpetuate inequality.

The enrichment process can be configured to produce fuel either for nuclear power plants or weapons. [Iran](#) insists its programme is only aimed at producing nuclear power.

To produce a nuclear weapon [Iran](#) would have to adjust its enrichment plant to yield bomb-ready nuclear fuel and miniaturize the material to fit into a warhead — steps that could take from six months to a year or more, analysts say. It would also have to kick out IAEA inspectors and leave the NPT.

Amano told reporters he would do his utmost to implement IAEA safeguard agreements in [Iran](#) and Syria. He also said there was hope for future agency work in North Korea, which told IAEA inspectors to leave in April and which has since carried out a nuclear test. It fired four short-range missiles on Thursday.

“I expect sincerely that (six-party diplomatic) talks will resume because only dialogue is the way for a solution,” Amano said. “Upon the decision of...talks, I expect that the IAEA will be able to play an important role in the verification of nuclear issues in North Korea.”

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