Iran president-elect ready for ‘constructive dialogue’ with Europe

AFP– Iran’s president-elect Masoud Pezeshkian said he looks forward to improved relations with European nations, even though he accused them of reneging on commitments to mitigate the impact of US sanctions.
Pezeshkian on July 6 won a runoff election against ultraconservative Saeed Jalili.

The 69-year-old has called for “constructive relations” with Western countries to “get Iran out of its isolation”, and favours reviving the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and global powers.

Washington unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018, reimposing sanctions and leading Iran to gradually reduce commitment to its terms. The deal aimed to curb nuclear activity which Tehran maintains is for peaceful purposes.

Writing late Friday in the English-language Tehran Times newspaper, Pezeshkian said that after the US withdrawal from the 2015 deal, European countries committed to try to salvage it and mitigate the impact of US sanctions.

“European countries have reneged on all these commitments,” Pezeshkian wrote.

“Despite these missteps, I look forward to engaging in constructive dialogue with European countries to set our relations on the right path, based on principles of mutual respect and equal footing.”

European Union spokeswoman Nabila Massrali had earlier congratulated Pezeshkian on his election, adding that the 27-member bloc is “ready to engage with the new government in

line with EU policy of critical engagement”.

Pezeshkian is a heart surgeon whose only previous government experience was as health minister about two decades ago.

The death of ultraconservative president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash necessitated the election, which was not due until 2025.

Pezeshkian is considered a “reformist” in Iran, and was the only candidate from that camp allowed to stand in the election, for which all contenders were approved by Iran’s Guardian Council.

Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the final say on all major policy issues in the country.

Under the hard-won 2015 deal Iran agreed to freeze its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of the crippling international sanctions.

After the US withdrawal and reimposition of sanctions, Iran gradually began reneging on its own commitments to the agreement.

The parties to the 2015 deal with Iran saw it as the best way to stop the Islamic republic from building a nuclear bomb -– a goal Tehran has always denied.

European Union members France and Germany were also party to the deal, along with Britain, China and Russia.

The European nations tried to salvage it, but Iran accused them of perceived inaction.

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