Merkel and Putin affirm Iran nuclear deal must be preserved

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Angela Merkel and Vladimir Putin have agreed to fight to save the Iran nuclear deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), after meeting in Moscow amid escalating tensions in the Middle East.

The German Chancellor said that "everything must be done" to keep the agreement, despite calls from U.S. President Donald Trump to abandon it, while her Russian counterpart described the deal as "tremendously important." At a press conference after talks, Putin said: "Russia and Germany resolutely stand for the continued implementation of the joint plan."

"We certainly could not ignore the issue of preserving the JCPOA on Iran's nuclear program, which is vitally important not only for the region but also for the whole world," he said. Putin recalled that after the United States withdrew from this fundamental agreement, the Iranian side declared that they suspended some of their voluntary commitments under the JCPOA. "Let me underscore this: they only suspended their voluntary commitments while they stress their readiness to go back to full compliance with the nuclear deal," the Russian president added.

For her part, German Chancellor Merkel stressed: "We will continue to employ all diplomatic means to keep this agreement alive, which is certainly not perfect but it is an agreement and it comprises commitments by all sides."

The JCPOA was reached in 2015 between Iran and the P5 1 (permanent members of the United Nations Security Council -- the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China, plus Germany) and the European Union. Tehran agreed to roll back parts of its nuclear weapons program in exchange for decreased economic sanctions.

In reaction to the U.S. withdrawal from the landmark deal in May 2018 and the subsequent sanctions, and in response to Europe's sluggishness in facilitating Iran's banking transactions and its oil exports, Iran, since May 2019, has made stage-by-stage moves away from its nuclear commitments.