

Ex-German chancellor reaffirms 'no' to Iran sanctions

BERLIN (IRNA) - Former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder reiterated his strong opposition to western sanctions against Iran.

Addressing the Berlin-based German Near and Middle East Association (NUMOV) Friday evening, Schroeder stressed the world was "not safer because of boycott."

He expressed hope that the latest "positive U.S. signals" to the Middle East region would pave the road for dialogue and cooperation.

The honorary NUMOV chairman pointed out he had repeatedly called for direct U.S.-Iranian talks in 2006 for which he was also "harshly criticized" at that time.

Schroeder added the U.S. policy shift in the Middle East should be seen as an opportunity to resolve the problems in the volatile region.

The ex-chancellor hailed Iran as a major business partner, while calling for "strong, reliable ties with the Middle East."

He highlighted the need for what he termed a "centrist strategic energy partnership" between the European Union and the Middle East.

Earlier this month, Schroeder emphasized Iran's "central role" for global energy supplies as a result of its vast energy resources.

Speaking at the First German Middle East Energy Round Table in Berlin with a focus on Iran, Schroeder was quoted saying Iran could be an "important (gas) supplier for Europe."

Pointing to the fact that more than 60 percent of the world's energy resources were located in the Near and Middle East, he urged the need for stability in the tension-filled region.

"In this context, direct talks between the United States and Iran, as well as with Syria are very important," said Schroeder.

"Without such a direct dialogue, it will not be possible to solve the problems in Iraq, or the conflict concerning the Iranian nuclear program or the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, he was cited saying.

The ex-chancellor called for an international policy which would refocus on cooperation and dialogue following years of U.S. unilateral action.

"This also applies to between the European Union, the U.S. and Iran," Schroeder said.