

TEHRAN PROPOSES A NEW REGIONAL FORUM FOR WEST ASIA

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Regional matters: Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the West is no longer in a dominant position. AFP

In a diplomatic initiative to address the lingering conflicts and mistrust in the Gulf region, Iran on Wednesday proposed a new platform for regional peace building. Delivering a major speech at the Raisina Dialogue here, its Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said such a forum should offer membership to countries based on a set of general principles to address real issues that affect people of the region and the world.

"We can start with a Regional Dialogue Forum, particularly in the Persian Gulf region which has been the scene of so many wars in the last four decades; from Saddam Hussein's aggression against Iran and later against Kuwait, to U.S. operations and finally to the humanitarian nightmare in Yemen," said Mr. Zarif, emphasising that the West is no longer in a dominant position in the world.

Continued erosion

The announcement of Persian Gulf Regional Dialogue Forum is significant as it comes in the wake of continued erosion of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which in the recent years has been divided between the Iranian and the Saudi spheres. Mr. Zarif suggested that the new forum could focus on promotion of peace and prosperity in the region.

"Admission to such a forum should be based on accepting generally-recognised principles and shared objectives, notably respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the political independence of all states," said the visiting minister, suggesting that the forum should render international boundaries inviolable and use of force impermissible.

Laying out the agenda of the regional forum, Mr. Zarif said that it could connect people of various member countries cutting across all traditional boundaries. He also highlighted the effectiveness of such a forum in dealing with threats like terrorism and extremism that has left the countries of the region in a state of continuous state of insecurity.

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