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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: Arabs to avoid targeting Israel at UN atom meeting (Reuters)

VIENNA (Reuters) - Arab states will refrain from targeting Israel over its assumed nuclear arsenal at a global meeting of U.N. atomic agency member countries next week, diplomats said on Thursday, an unexpected gesture of restraint sure to be welcomed by the West.

It would be a rare conciliatory move in the volatile Middle East, where Israeli-Arab tension has risen in recent weeks over a pending Palestinian bid for statehood recognition at the United Nations later this month, a move opposed by Washington.

A senior Arab diplomat said the decision not to single out Israel was designed to give "more room" for two planned meetings to succeed -- an International Atomic Energy Agency-hosted forum in November on nuclear weapons-free zones, to be attended by Arab states and Israel, and an Egyptian-proposed conference in 2012 to discuss creating such a zone in the Middle East.

"Why not give it a chance?" the Arab envoy said. The decision was taken at an Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo this week and it was a "very tough" one to make, he said.

Two Arab envoys accredited to the IAEA told Reuters the change of plan should be seen as a "confidence-building measure" and "good gesture from Arab states" to foster wider efforts to create a Middle East free of nuclear weapons.

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