



OPEN LETTER

26 APRIL 2022

By 47 signatories

Open Letter to the U.S. and Iranian Leadership about the Iran Nuclear Deal

This open letter has been signed by members of the European Leadership Network, Board members of the International Crisis Group and Council members from the European Council on Foreign Relations.

We write to express our growing concern that negotiations to restore Iranian compliance with, and U.S. return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) appear to have entered a period of stasis that threatens to undo the real and welcome progress made in recent months toward reinstating a non-proliferation achievement that is crucial for international peace and security.

At a time when transatlantic cooperation has become all the more critical to respond against Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, for U.S. and European leaders to let slip the opportunity to defuse a nuclear crisis in the Middle East would be a grave mistake.

The JCPOA was a success. Persistent multilateral diplomacy, in which several of the undersigned were personally engaged, secured an agreement that advanced our shared non-proliferation goals. Preserving the benefits of a deal limiting Iran's stockpiles of enriched uranium, capping its levels of enrichment and extending the timeline for the accumulation of fissile material that could be used for a potential weapon, all under the watchful eyes of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is the reason why European governments rejected the Trump administration's reckless decision to abandon the deal without a viable alternative

and have worked hard to keep the deal alive following the 2018 U.S. withdrawal.

The strategy that the U.S. followed for more than two years after this withdrawal, based on "maximum pressure" alone, yielded little but nuclear escalation, dangerous regional sparring and economic deprivation for the Iranian people. The legacy of this strategic error can today be measured in the tons of enriched uranium Iran has since accumulated, including uranium enriched to near weapons-grade; in the thousands of advanced centrifuges it is spinning; and in the rapidly dwindling timeframe for Iran to reach a breakout capability. President Biden rightly identified a mutual return, by the U.S. and Iran, to their respective commitments under the 2015 deal as a necessary course correction.

Since April 2021, negotiations in Vienna have painstakingly but productively forged a draft document that will reverse Iran's nuclear advances, in return for relief from U.S. sanctions imposed during the Trump administration that are inconsistent with the JCPOA. As the EU's Josep Borrell put it over a month ago, "a final text is essentially ready and on the table".

There are two possible scenarios ahead. In one, the U.S. swiftly shows decisive leadership and requisite flexibility to resolve remaining issues of political (not nuclear) disagreement

with Tehran. In the other, the parties enter a state of corrosive stalemate, serving neither side's interests, that risks devolving into a cycle of increased nuclear tension, inevitably countered by the further application of coercive tools.

We know that the politics of this issue are difficult, particularly on issues like the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, which is reportedly the last lingering issue of contention. While the details are of course for U.S. policymakers to determine, we believe that there are ways to provide the counter-terrorism benefits of the current designation while still accommodating Iran's specific request, and consider it imperative that these

be fully explored. For its part, Iran should not expect a nuclear deal to address broader areas of disagreement between Tehran and Washington. Both sides must approach this final phase of negotiation with an understanding that the strategic implications of failure would be grave and profound.

Based on our long experience in diplomacy and statecraft, we see a deal as eminently possible. Having come within touching distance, we urge President Biden and the Iranian leadership to demonstrate flexibility in tackling an issue of vital significance to the global non-proliferation regime and regional stability, and see these negotiations through to a successful conclusion.

SIGNATORIES

CZECH REPUBLIC

1. Jan Kavan, former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, former President of the UNGA, and Chairman of the Board, Czech-Slovak-Iranian Chamber of Commerce (CSIOK)

DENMARK

2. Mogens Lykketoft, former Foreign Minister and President of the UN 70th General Assembly

FRANCE

3. Gérard Araud, former Permanent Representative of France to the UN, former Director-General for Political and Security Affairs

4. Michel Duclos, former Ambassador and Special Advisor, Institut Montaigne (Paris)

5. Jean-David Levitte, former Permanent Representative of France to the UN

6. Général d'armée aérienne (ret) Bernard Norlain, former Commander of Air Defence Command and Air Combat Command

GERMANY

7. Wolfgang Ischinger, former Ambassador and Chairman of the Munich Security Conference

8. Joschka Fischer, former Foreign Minister and former Vice-Chancellor

9. Angela Kane, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

10. General (ret) Klaus Naumann, former Chief of Defence Germany and former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee

11. Karsten D. Voigt, former Chairman of the German-Russian parliamentary group in the Bundestag and former President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly

HUNGARY

12. Balázs Csuday, former Permanent Representative of Hungary to the UN (Vienna)

ITALY

13. Giancarlo Aragona, former Ambassador and former Secretary-General of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

14. General (ret) Vincenzo Camporini, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force and Chief of Defence General Staff

15. Admiral (ret) Giampaolo Di Paola, former Minister of Defence

16. Stefano Stefanini, former Ambassador, Executive Board of the European Leadership Network

17. Dr Nathalie Tocci, Director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and former Special Advisor to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borell

18. Carlo Trezza, former Ambassador for Disarmament and non-proliferation, Chairman of MTCR and UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board for Disarmament Affairs

LITHUANIA

19. Vygaudas Usackas, former Foreign Minister and former EU Ambassador to Russia and Afghanistan

NETHERLANDS

20. Prof Klaas de Vries, former Minister of Home Affairs

NORWAY

21. Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister and former Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Deputy Chair of The Elders

POLAND

22. Bogdan Klich, former Minister of National Defence

23. Andrzej Olechowski, former Minister of Foreign Affairs

24. Prof Adam D. Rotfeld, Warsaw University and former Minister of Foreign Affairs

SERBIA

25. Goran Svilanović, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and former Secretary-General of the Regional Cooperation Council

SPAIN

26. Javier Solana, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, former High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and former NATO Secretary-General

SWEDEN

27. Carl Bildt, former Prime Minister and former Foreign Affairs Minister

28. Dr Hans Blix, former Foreign Minister and former Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

29. Rolf Ekéus, former Chairman of the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, SIPRI, and former Ambassador of Sweden to the United States

TURKEY

30. Hikmet Çetin, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Speaker of the Grand National Assembly

31. Vahit Erdem, former Under Secretary of the Defence Industry and former Vice President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly

32. Tacan Ildem, former Assistant Secretary-General, NATO and former Ambassador

33. Ahmet Üzümcü, former Permanent Representative of Turkey to NATO and former Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

UNITED KINGDOM

34. The Rt Hon Bob Ainsworth, former Defence Secretary

35. Sir Tony Brenton, former Ambassador to the Russian Federation

36. Lord (Des) Browne of Ladyton, former Defence Secretary and Chairman of the European Leadership Network

37. The Rt Hon Alistair Burt, former Minister of State for the Middle East at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

38. Lord (David) Hannay of Chiswick, former Ambassador to the EU and to the UN

39. The Rt. Hon Baroness (Pauline) Neville-Jones, former Minister for Security and Counter-Terrorism

40. Sir Nick Harvey, former Member of Parliament and former Minister of State for the Armed Forces

41. Lord (John) Kerr of Kinlochard, Independent member of the House of Lords

42. Lord (Tom) King of Bridgwater, former Defence Secretary

43. Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown, President, Open Society Foundations, and former UN Deputy Secretary-General

44. Madeleine Moon, former Member of Parliament and former President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly

45. General the Lord (David) Ramsbotham, retired British Army officer, former Adjutant General and ADC General to Her Majesty the Queen

46. The Rt Hon Jack Straw, former Foreign Secretary

47. The Rt Hon Lord (David) Triesman, former Parliamentary Under Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and former General Secretary of the Labour Party