

The Elders propose ‘minimisation agenda’ as urgent first step to nuclear disarmament

MUNICH, 15 February 2019

The Elders today called on all nuclear powers to take urgent steps towards nuclear disarmament, in the form of a “minimisation” agenda, to counter a dangerous rise in geopolitical tensions and distrust between states.

They warned that the entire architecture of international arms control and security treaties is at risk from the unilateral actions of powerful nuclear-armed states, particularly the United States and Russia regarding the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

The Elders will present a new initiative on [nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament](#) to the Munich Security Conference on Saturday 16 February. They urge nuclear-armed states, particularly the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, to commit to a “minimisation” agenda that offers a realistic long-term path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

[Mary Robinson](#), Chair of The Elders, said:

“Nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to the future of humanity, and tensions between key powers are dangerously high. The only way to tackle this threat is through tough, credible and sustained multilateral engagement. The shared goal must be to reduce stockpiles and prevent weapons being acquired or developed by any further states, which could have catastrophic humanitarian consequences for the whole world.”

The Elders’ proposal is focused on four key principles: **Doctrine**, whereby every nuclear state should make an unequivocal “No First Use” declaration; **De-alerting**, with almost all warheads taken off high alert status; **Deployment**, with a substantial reduction of all nuclear warheads that are currently operationally deployed; and **Decreased numbers**, to dramatically cut the number of nuclear weapons in existence.

The Elders also reiterated their support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed between Iran and the international community as a successful model of multilateral diplomacy to prevent nuclear proliferation.

They urged the remaining signatories to the deal to continue to undertake all political, economic and security measures to maintain the JCPOA despite the withdrawal of the United States.

[Lakhdar Brahimi](#), Elder, former Algerian Foreign Minister and UN diplomat, said:

“When the Cold War ended, many of us hoped the shadow of nuclear annihilation would be permanently lifted. Instead, complacency and lethargy set in, so today the risk of a devastating nuclear war is at its highest for decades. Today’s leaders must commit to the vision and legacy of the United States and Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War that a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought.”

ENDS

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About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Ban Ki-moon](#) (Deputy Chair), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Zeid Raad Al Hussein](#), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel](#) (Deputy Chair), [Juan Manuel Santos](#), [Mary Robinson](#) (Chair) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) was a founding member of The Elders and served as Chair from 2013 to 2018.

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