

## The Elders call on the world to wake up to the threats of nuclear war and climate disaster as they unveil the 2020 Doomsday Clock

WASHINGTON D.C., 23 January 2020

[Mary Robinson](#), Chair of The Elders and former President of Ireland, and [Ban Ki-moon](#), Deputy Chair of The Elders and former United Nations Secretary-General, today joined experts from the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists for the unveiling of the Doomsday Clock in Washington DC, an annual assessment of the existential risks faced by humanity.

The Clock's hands were moved forward to 100 seconds to midnight - the closest to midnight they have been since they were first set in 1947. The decision takes into account the precarious state of nuclear arms controls, the growing threat of climate disaster, and how these can be compounded by disruptive new technologies.

*"Our planet faces two concurrent existential threats: the climate crisis and nuclear weapons. We are faced by a gathering storm of extinction-level consequences, and time is running out,"* **Mary Robinson** said.

The Elders specifically called on President Trump to respond to Russian President Vladimir Putin's offer to open negotiations on New START, which will expire in February 2021 unless the agreement between Washington and Moscow is extended.

Following the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in July 2019, the end of New START would mean there was no remaining arms control treaty in force between the United States and Russia, raising the prospect of a new nuclear arms race.

The Elders reiterated their proposals for a "nuclear minimisation"<sup>i</sup> agenda as the best way of making progress towards complete disarmament by the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and all other nuclear powers.

**Ban Ki-moon** warned that the threat of catastrophe is being exacerbated by attacks on, and disregard for, the multilateral rules-based system:

*“The existential risks of nuclear conflagration and climate change are increasing just as the decision-making frameworks to address them are unravelling. From the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the Iran Nuclear Deal to deadlock on nuclear disarmament talks and division at the UN Security Council, our mechanisms for collaboration are being undermined when we need them most.”*

On the climate emergency, **Mary Robinson** called for a change of mindset if the world is to tackle the threat effectively:

*“The science of the climate crisis makes it imperative that we take urgent action in 2020. We need a change of mindset in politics, finance, business and civil society, one that enables us to keep temperature rises at or below 1.5°C, whilst protecting the rights, dignity and livelihoods of those affected by the shift to a carbon neutral economy. Not to do so will be a death sentence for humanity.”*

The Elders believe 2020 is a crucial year to defend and revitalise the multilateral system’s ability to address the threats of nuclear and climate catastrophe, as the world marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

*“There is an opportunity in 2020 for the world to renew its commitment to multilateralism – to create the foundations for a just transition to a carbon net zero economy, and redouble our efforts towards a world free of nuclear weapons.”* **Ban Ki-moon** said.

ENDS

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<sup>i</sup> The Elders nuclear minimisation agenda is summed up by “4 Ds”:

**Doctrine:** every nuclear state should make an unequivocal “No First Use” declaration;

**De-alerting:** almost all warheads should be taken off high alert status;

**Deployment:** substantially reduce the one-quarter of all nuclear warheads that are currently operationally deployed;

**Decreased numbers:** dramatically cut the number of nuclear weapons in existence.

The Elders Policy Paper:

<https://theelders.org/sites/default/files/The%20Elders%20Report%20Nuclear%20Position%20Paper%20A5%20Nov19.pdf>

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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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