

UK nuclear announcement ‘shocking and alarming’ warn the Elders

LONDON, 16 March 2021

Following the release by the UK government of its Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, [Mary Robinson](#), Chair of The Elders said:

“The announcement today by the UK Government of its intention to increase by over 40% the cap on its nuclear warhead numbers is surprising and deeply alarming. This would be incompatible with the UK’s international obligations to pursue disarmament under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and risks contributing to a dangerous new nuclear arms race. It also risks undermining the NPT Review Conference due to take place in August this year.

It is particularly shocking that a permanent member of the UN Security Council should make such an announcement at a time when other countries have been taking positive steps to reverse the deterioration in nuclear arms controls, following the extension of New START between the US and Russia, and the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons earlier this year.

While the UK cites increased security threats as justification for this move, the appropriate response to these challenges should be to work multilaterally to strengthen international arms control agreements and to reduce – not increase – the number of nuclear weapons in existence.

The Elders call on all nuclear states to demonstrate their commitment to nuclear disarmament, and to make concrete reductions to their stockpiles in line with the [minimisation agenda](#) put forward by The Elders.

As decision-makers take stock of the UK government’s announcement, we urge all world leaders to recall the spirit of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev’s declaration in 1985 that “a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought”, and redouble their efforts to make progress towards achieving a world wholly free from nuclear weapons.”

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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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