Statement: Call to Action on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The United Nations announced in late March that the 2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) would be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This important conference, originally scheduled to begin on April 27, 2020, may now be held as late as April 2021.

The NPT is a cornerstone of international cooperation and essential to preserving norms against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Yet many around the world have been losing confidence in the NPT system given the end of other arms control treaties and stalled progress toward disarmament by countries possessing nuclear weapons.

Though the world will continue grappling with a devastating pandemic for months, this delay allows additional time for the treaty’s States Parties to engage in constructive dialogue on nonproliferation and disarmament issues.

We call on the treaty’s States Parties to use the months ahead for trust-building and good faith efforts to ensure the NPT continues to stand as a trusted pillar of international security into the future.

The NPT’s importance does not end with nonproliferation and disarmament. Indeed, it is crucial to addressing another existential threat facing the world: climate change. The safeguards system developed over the past 50 years to ensure peaceful uses of nuclear technology is essential to nonproliferation, no matter what future trajectories we see for nuclear energy.

The continued strengthening of near-universal treaties—whether the NPT or the Paris Agreement—sends a powerful signal that people of the world can work through their differences and unite in fighting the greatest threats to international security. Amidst a daunting and deadly global pandemic, cooperation is more imperative than ever.

Signed,

Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü  
Former Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons  
Senior Advisor, Council on Strategic Risks

Honorable Alice Hill  
Senior Fellow for Climate Change Policy  
Council on Foreign Relations  
Former Senior Director for a Resilience Policy, National Security Council Staff & Special Assistant to the President

Andrea Rezzonico  
Assistant Program Director  
Council on Strategic Risks

Honorable Andrew Weber  
Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs  
Senior Fellow, Council on Strategic Risks
Anita Nilsson, MD  
Former Director of the Office of Nuclear Security, International Atomic Energy Agency

Benjamin Santer, PhD  
Atmospheric Scientist  
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Bishop Garrison  
Director of National Security Outreach  
Human Rights First

Caitlin Werrell  
Co-Founder & Director of Research  
Council on Strategic Risks and the Center for Climate and Security

Catherine Dill  
Non-Resident Senior Fellow  
Council on Strategic Risks

Christine Parthemore  
CEO, Council on Strategic Risks  
Former Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs

Corey Johnson, PhD  
Professor & Head of the Department of Geography, Environment, and Sustainability, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Commander David Slayton, USN (Ret)  
Advisory Board Member  
Center for Climate and Security

Honorable Deborah Gordon  
Independent Consultant  
Board of Directors  
Council on Strategic Risks

Elizabeth Threlkeld  
Fellow & Deputy Director, South Asia  
Program Stimson Center

Francesco Femia  
Co-Founder & Director of Research  
Council on Strategic Risks and the Center for Climate and Security

Lieutenant General John G. Castellaw, USMC (Ret)  
Advisory Board Member  
Center for Climate and Security

John Conger  
Director, Center for Climate and Security  
Former Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), U.S. Department of Defense

Rear Admiral John Gower, CB OBE  
Former Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Nuclear & Chemical, Biological), UK Ministry of Defence  
Senior Advisor, Council on Strategic Risks

Rear Admiral Leendert Hering, Sr., USN (Ret)  
Advisory Board Member  
Center for Climate and Security

Lauren Enright  
Founder and CEO  
Axiom Climate

Meggen W. Petersen  
Former U.S. Coordinator, Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, U.S. Department of State
The multidisciplinary experts signed above are among the team and advisors to the Council on Strategic Risks (CSR), or participants in CSR’s Working Group on Climate, Nuclear, and Security Affairs.