

## **The Elders call for international condemnation of Russia's New START suspension**

**23 February 2023**

On the first anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, The Elders call on all UN member states to condemn President Putin's latest efforts to escalate his illegal war on Ukraine through suspending Russia's participation in New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty).

We urge Russia and the United States to return to dialogue to manage the risks of nuclear weapons, which are particularly high at times of increased global tensions.

President Putin's action increases the existential threat of nuclear catastrophe for humanity and risks the safety and security of all nations. It runs contrary to Russia's own security interests, and raises the alarming prospect of a world without any constraints on the arsenals of the two nuclear superpowers – Russia and the United States – for the first time since 1972.

Russia's actions further underline the importance of global unity in support of Ukraine's sovereignty, and against President Putin's cynical use of nuclear blackmail to further his belligerent ambitions.

Neutrality is not a moral option in the face of Russia's war of aggression, and it is in the interest of all states to make clear that violations of the UN Charter and international law will not go unpunished.

Despite the dangerous actions of the Russian government, we still believe that dialogue remains the only effective way to limit nuclear risks and prevent a new self-defeating arms race taking hold between the main nuclear powers.

To avoid further exacerbating tensions, we urge Russia to continue to observe New START limits even while it has suspended implementation of the treaty. We recognise the measured response from the US government so far, and encourage the US to preserve space for restoring Russian compliance with the treaty should circumstances change.

[Mary Robinson](#), Chair of The Elders, and former President of Ireland said:

*“President Putin’s suspension of New START participation is another worrying attempt to use nuclear sabre-rattling to further his war of aggression against Ukraine. This is in direct violation of Russia’s international obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith. The world must respond with a united voice to condemn Russia’s dangerous actions and to pressure them to reverse course.”*

[Ban Ki-moon](#), Deputy Chair of The Elders and former Secretary-General of the United Nations, said:

*“I am alarmed at Russia’s decision to suspend participation in New START, which risks fuelling a dangerous and expensive new arms race with unpredictable consequences for the entire world. Such an outcome would be in the interests of no-one, including the people of Russia. This requires a sober response from the United States and the broader international community to persuade Russia to return to compliance with the treaty while making clear that the world will not be held hostage by President Putin’s nuclear blackmail.”*

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 \(Deputy Chair\)](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Elbegdorj Tsakhia](#), [Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein](#), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel \(Deputy Chair\)](#), [Juan Manuel Santos](#), [Mary Robinson \(Chair\)](#) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), and [Jimmy Carter](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Desmond Tutu](#) (1931-2021) and [Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) were founding members of The Elders and served as Chairs from 2007 to 2013 and 2013 to 2018 respectively. [Ela Bhatt](#) (1933 - 2022) was a founding member of The Elders until 2016.

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