

Statement by the Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group*

Support for Dialogue Among Governments to Reduce Nuclear Risks

February 16, 2018

Reducing and eliminating nuclear risks is an existential common interest for all nations. We have crossed over to a new nuclear era, where a fateful error triggered by an accident, miscalculation, or blunder is the most likely catalyst to a nuclear catastrophe. In the Euro-Atlantic region today, these risks are compounded by heightened tensions between NATO and Russia—with little communication between military and political leaders—and the potential for deliberate cyber threats. In the absence of initiative, we will continue to drift down a path where nuclear weapons use becomes more probable. Governments have a shared responsibility to work together to mitigate these risks.

- **First, leaders of states with nuclear weapons in the region should reinforce the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.**

This principle—articulated at the height of the Cold War by the presidents of the United States and Russia and embraced then by all European countries—was essential to ending the Cold War. Today, it would communicate that leaders recognize their responsibility to work together to prevent nuclear catastrophe. Agreement on this key principle could also be a foundation for other practical steps to reduce the risk of nuclear use.

- **Second, nations should work to preserve and extend existing agreements and treaties that are crucial to sustaining transparency and predictability.**

This is not just an issue between Washington and Moscow. The demise of the arms control architecture will dramatically increase nuclear risks for all Europeans and indeed the world. This year may be crucial. Nations in the Euro-Atlantic region have a shared interest in preserving the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) Treaty between the United States and Russia, and insisting on full compliance by the parties to that agreement. Similarly, all nations in the Euro-Atlantic region have a stake in the full implementation of the U.S.-Russia 2010 New START Treaty, and the mutual extension of that Treaty through 2026.

* For the past three years, Des Browne, Wolfgang Ischinger, Igor Ivanov, Sam Nunn, and their respective organizations—the European Leadership Network (ELN), the Munich Security Conference (MSC), the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), and the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI)—have been working with former and current officials and experts from a group of Euro-Atlantic states and the European Union to test ideas and develop proposals for improving security in areas of existential common interest. The Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group (EASLG) operates as an independent and informal initiative, with participants who reflect the diversity of the Euro-Atlantic region from the United States, Canada, Russia, and fifteen European countries.

- **Third, all nations should support full implementation of and strict compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran.**

The JCPOA is a crucial foundation for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. We should be building on its success, not contemplating its termination. Actions by any nation that may precipitate the demise or violate the terms of the JCPOA will increase nuclear dangers in the region and damage our ability to address nuclear dangers around the world.

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