Over the past decade, relations among the major powers have deteriorated, while strategic risks and mistrust among nuclear powers have increased. Key factors have been the near-total erosion of arms control, and new complexities and risks arising within nuclear and strategic conventional modernisation, including the imminent arrival of artificial intelligence and machine learning in the military-strategic domain. These developments, and the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’s entry-into-force, are stark reminders of the risks stemming from nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown the need for more international cooperation to recover from the global health crisis, as states continue to place blame on each other’s lack of transparency or belated decisions. In the run-up to the tenth NPT review conference, the P5 states (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States), have stopped short of delivering nuclear reductions. Both the P5 and non-nuclear-weapon states have a joint obligation to move towards disarmament under NPT Article VI.

The progress that the P5 have made on Article VI has slowed in part due to persisting mistrust about each other’s intentions, stemming from allegations of non-compliance with arms control agreements and claims that the nuclear force modernisations of some states contradict their rhetoric. As a result, nuclear-weapon states have hardened their nuclear postures in response to threat perception instead of cutting arsenals.

At this critical time, therefore, we call upon the P5 states to reduce nuclear weapons risks through several concrete measures. Committing to a regular, sustained and open-ended P5 dialogue on strategic risk reduction through a dedicated working group could be the first step towards concerted efforts to this end by the established nuclear powers.

A sustained dialogue committed to preventing and reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use is in the vital interests of both the P5 and non-nuclear-weapon states. The P5 can build on their ongoing exchanges on nuclear doctrines to clarify remaining ambiguities that have jeopardised geostrategic relations within the frameworks of their respective nuclear policies. Resolving misunderstandings about each other’s intentions and actions would increase strategic stability by reducing the risks of miscalculation and misperception.

Given the expressed interest of non-nuclear and nuclear-weapon states to engage in strategic and nuclear risk reduction – as prominently reflected in the NPT final documents of 2000 and 2010, the 2019 G7 Statement on Non-Proliferation and
Disarmament, and in the work of the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) initiative and the Stockholm Initiative – committing to a P5 dialogue process presents an opportunity to incorporate P5 views into the overall agenda and explore synergies with the aforementioned risk reduction initiatives.

Creating a working group on strategic risk reduction is a feasible action that the P5 can undertake in the current environment to positively affect the proceedings at the next NPT Review Conference and contribute to its success. In the absence of nuclear reductions, a working group on strategic risk reduction is a practical way for the P5 to demonstrate their seriousness about addressing the concerns expressed by many non-nuclear-weapon states, as well as civil society, about the potential risks stemming from nuclear weapons, despite the current challenges.

Despite its value, a dialogue process on strategic risk reduction can only be a first start for agreeing and implementing concrete measures in the next review cycle, for defusing tensions, as well as for responding to non-nuclear-weapon state interest in addressing the risk issue as comprehensively as possible. In line with their obligation under NPT Article VI, the P5 should at a minimum discuss measures related to restoring military-to-military engagement between the P5 to avoid missteps and misunderstandings and to decide on actions not to take in a crisis in the space and cyber domains. The P5 must also address the risks of most concern to non-nuclear-weapon states, including through steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security strategies.

To have meaningful impact, a P5 working group must be embedded in the NPT process and be receptive to the input of non-nuclear weapon states regarding the risks of most concern. All States Parties have a vital stake in these issues. The P5 and non-nuclear weapon states can work on tangible P5 and non-P5 deliverables in the sphere of risk reduction for the next NPT review cycle that are conducive to disarmament.

*The opinions articulated above also do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Leadership Network or any of its members. The ELN’s aim is to encourage debates that will help develop Europe’s capacity to address pressing foreign, defence, and security challenge.*

Signed by members of the European Leadership Network:

**Albania**

1. **Fatmir Mediu**, Former Defence Minister

**Austria**

2. **Alexander Kmentt**, Former Permanent Representative of Austria to the Political and Security Committee of the European Union
3. **Ambassador ret. Dr Wolfgang Petritsch**, President, Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation
Belarus

4. Yauheni Preiherman, Founder and Director, Minsk Dialogue Council on Foreign Relations
5. Ambassador Vladimir Senko, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, former Permanent Representative to EU and NATO, and Ambassador to the United Kingdom
6. Andrei Yeliseyeu, Research Director, Eurasian States in Transition (EAST) Centre

Bulgaria

7. Dr Solomon Passy, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Founding President of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria
8. Prof. Todor Tagarev, Head, Centre for Security and Defence Management, Institute of ICT, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Canada

9. Kitty Hazel, Development Director, European Leadership Network
10. Prof. Stefanie von Hlatky, Associate Professor of Political Studies, Queen’s University

China

11. Dr Tong Zhao, Senior Fellow, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy

Croatia

12. Ambassador Budimir Lončar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia; Special Advisor to the Rector of Liberias International University
13. Prof. Ivo Šlaus, Nuclear physicist and Honorary President, World Academy of Art and Science

Denmark

14. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs
15. Mogens Lykketoft, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former President of the United Nations General Assembly
16. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Former Secretary-General of NATO, Prime Minister of Denmark, and CEO of Rasmussen Global

Finland

17. Dr Tarja Cronberg, Former Member of the European Parliament
18. Dr Tytti Erästö, Senior Researcher, SIPRI (in private capacity)
19. Ambassador ret. Jaakko Laajava, Former Under-Secretary of State
20. Admiral ret. Juhani Kaskeala, Former Chief of Defence Forces

France

21. Héloïse Abdalan, University Consortium Fellow
22. Nicole Ameline, Former Minister and Chair of the Defence and Security Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
23. Dr David Cadier, Researcher, Sciences Po, Paris
24. Admiral ret. Alain Coldefy, Former Vice Chief of Defence Staff
25. Michel Duclos, Former Ambassador and Special Advisor for Geopolitics, Institute Montaigne
26. Juliette Faure, University Consortium Fellow
27. François Heisbourg, Special Advisor, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique
28. Pierre Lellouche, Former Secretary of State and First Deputy of Paris
29. Emmanuelle Maitre, Research Fellow, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique
30. Alain Richard, Senator and former Minister of Defence

Georgia

31. Valeri Chechelashvili, Former First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
32. Tedo Japaridze, Former Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs
33. Tinatin Japaridze, University Consortium Fellow
34. Beka Kiria, Founder and Director of Gagra Institute, Tbilisi
35. la Tserodze, University Consortium Fellow

Germany

36. Dr Stefanie Babst, Senior Associate Fellow, European Leadership Network
37. Julia Berghofer, Policy Fellow and Vice-chair, Younger Generation Leaders Network (YGLN)
38. Heinrich Brauss, Former NATO Assistant Secretary-General for Defence Policy and Planning, Senior Associate Fellow, German Council of Foreign Relations
39. Prof. Angela Kane, Former United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
40. Gen. Roderich Kiesewetter, Representative of the CDU/CSU Caucus to the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee
41. Silvana Koch-Mehrin, President of Women Political Leaders Global Forum
42. Dr Maximilian Hoell, Policy Fellow, European Leadership Network
43. Dr Klaus Naumann, General (ret.), German Atlantic Association
44. Rudolf Scharping, Federal Minister of Defence
45. Dr Klaus Wittman, Senior Fellow, Aspen Institute Deutschland
46. Karsten Voigt, Former member of the Bundestag and former President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
47. Uta Zapf, Former Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

Hungary

48. Balazs Csuday, Former Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations, Vienna
49. Prof. János Martonyi, Former Minister for Foreign Affairs

Italy

50. Prof. Francesco Calogero, Emeritus Professor of Theoretical Physics, University of Rome La Sapienza and ex-officio member of the Pugwash Council
51. Federica Mogherini, Former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
52. Dr Nathalie Tocci, Director IAI and Special Advisor to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borell

Kazakhstan

53. Dr Vera Axyonova, Managing Director, Academics in Solidarity, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Latvia

54. Diana Potjomkina, Secretary of the YGLN

Moldova

55. Vadim Pistrinciuc, PhD, Executive Director Institute for Strategic Initiatives, Republic of Moldova

Netherlands

56. Laurens Jan Brinkhorst, Former Deputy Prime Minister
57. Angelien Eijsink, Former NATO Parliamentary Assembly Vice-President and Member of Parliament 2003-2017
58. Bert Koenders, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs

Norway

59. Dr Gro Brundtland, Former Prime Minister and Director-General of the World Health Organisation

Poland

60. Dr Katarzyna Kubiak, Senior Policy Fellow, European Leadership Network
61. Janusz Onszkiewicz, Former Minister of Defence
62. Prof. Adam D Rotfield, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland, and Professor at the Warsaw University
63. Dr Bartosz Rydlnski, Aleksander Kwasniewski’s Foundation, Poland
64. The Hon. Radoslaw Sikorski MEP, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence, and Member of the European Parliament

Russia

65. Dmitry Androssow, Member of the Federal Political Council of the People’s Freedom Party (PARNAS)
66. **Alexander A. Bessmertnykh**, Former Minister of USSR/Russia; President, International Foreign policy Association; Chairman, World Council of former Foreign Ministers

67. **Lieutenant-General (Ret.) Evgeny Buzhinsky**, Former Head of the International Treaties Department and Deputy Head of the Directorate of International Military Cooperation, Ministry of Defence

68. **Prof. Alexander Dynkin**, President Primakov IMEMO, Moscow

69. **Dr Alexey Gromyko**, Director of the Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, RAS Member

70. **Nikita Gryazin**, University Consortium Fellow

71. **Prof. Igor Istomin**, Associate Professor, MGIMO University

72. **Pavel Kanevskiy**, Chair of the YGLN, Associate Professor in Politics at the Lomonosov Moscow State University

73. **Anna Osetrova**, University Consortium Fellow

74. **Dmitry Polikanov**, Board Member, PIR Centre

75. **Dr Sergey Rogov**, Director of the Institute for the US and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Science (ISKRAN)

76. **Mikhail Rostovskly**, Journalist and Commentator, Moskovsky Komsomolets

77. **Dr Pasha Sharikov**, Leading research fellow, Institute for USA and Canadian Studies Russian Academy of Sciences

78. **Dr Ivan Timofeev**, Director of Programs, Russian International Affairs Council

79. **Dr Petr Topychkanov**, Senior Researcher, SIPRI (in private capacity)

80. **General ret. Vyacheslav Trubnikov**, Former Director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, IMEMO Russian Academy of Science Directorate Member

81. **Inal Tugov**, University Consortium Fellow

82. **Igor Yurgens**, Chairman of the Board of the Institute of Contemporary Development foundation, Vice-President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs

**Serbia**

83. **Ivana Milatovic**, Political communications specialist and member of the Younger Generation Leaders Network

84. **Dr Mira Milosevich-Juaristi**, Senior Analyst for Russia and Eurasia, Elcano Royal Institute for International and Strategic Studies

85. **Goran Svilanović**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and former Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council

**Slovakia**

86. **Katarina Kertysova**, Policy Fellow, European Leadership Network

87. **Juraj Nosal**, Member of Younger Generation Leaders Network, Slovakia

**Sweden**

88. **Ingvar Carlson**, Former Prime Minister
89. Rolf Ekeus, former Ambassador and Distinguished Associate Fellow, SIPRI
90. Andreas Persbo, Research Director, European Leadership Network
91. Henrik Salander, Ambassador, Swedish Academy of War Sciences

Spain

92. Dr Javier Solana, Former NATO Secretary-General

Switzerland

93. Marc Friedli, University Consortium Fellow

Turkey

94. Prof. Dr Zaynep Alemdar, Founder, Women in Foreign Policy Initiative
95. Prof. Dr Mustafa Aydin, President, International Relations Council of Turkey
96. Hikmet Çetin, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs
97. Vahit Erdem, Former MP and Head of Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
98. Özdem Sanberk, Former Ambassador and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
99. Ahmet Üzümçü, Former Permanent Representative to NATO and former Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Ukraine

100. Oleksandr Chalyi, Former First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and President, Grant Thornton LLC
101. Dr Anatoliy Grytsenko, Former Defence Minister of Ukraine
102. Tetiana Melnyk, Research Fellow, Odessa Center for Non-proliferation

United Kingdom

103. The Rt. Hon Bob Ainsworth, former Defence Secretary
104. The Rt. Hon the Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom, former Chair of the Defence Select Committee and member of the House of Lords
105. The Rt. Hon Margaret Beckett, Member of Parliament
106. Sebastian Brixey-Williams, Co-Director, BASIC
107. Sir Tony Brenton, former Ambassador to Russia
108. The Rt. Hon Alistair Burt, former Minister of State for the Middle East
109. Ben Challis, Policy Fellow, European Leadership Network
110. The Rt. Hon Lord (Des) Browne of Ladyton, Former Defence Secretary and Chair of the European Leadership Network
111. The Rt. Hon Lord (Menzies) Campbell of Pittenweem, former leader of the Liberal Democrats and Honorary President, European Leadership Network
112. The Rt. Hon Charles Clarke, former Home Secretary
113. Rear Admiral John Gower, former Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Nuclear and Chemical, Biological), UK Ministry of Defence
114. Sir Nick Harvey, former UK Minister of State for Defence
115. Lord (David) Hannay of Chiswick, former Ambassador to the United Nations and Chair of UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Security and Non-Proliferation in the UK Parliament
116. Lord (Tom) King of Bridgewater, former Defence Secretary
117. Jane Kinninmont, Director of Impact, European Leadership Network
118. Esther Kersley, Communications and Commissioning Officer, European Leadership Network
119. The Rt. Hon Lord (John) Kerr of Kinlochard, former Ambassador to the United States and EU
120. Simon Lunn, Senior Associate Fellow, European Leadership Network
121. Gen. Sir John McColl, former NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) and Lieutenant Governor of Jersey
122. Tom McKane, former Director General for Strategy and Security Policy, UK Ministry of Defence
123. Imogen Naldrett, Action Group Officer, European Leadership Network
124. The Rt. Hon Lord (David) Owen, Former Foreign Secretary
125. General the Lord (David) Ramsbotham, retired British Army officer, former Adjutant General and ADC General to Her Majesty the Queen
126. General the Lord (David) Richards of Herstmonceux, former Chief of the Defence Staff, member of the House of Lords
127. Lord (Peter) Ricketts, former National Security Advisor, former Permanent Under Secretary and Head of Diplomatic Service
128. Sir Malcolm Rifkind QC, former Foreign and Defence Secretary
129. Sahil Shah, Policy Fellow, European Leadership Network
130. Shatabisha Shetty, Co-founder, European Leadership Network
131. The Rt. Hon Lord (David) Triesman, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), and former General Secretary of the Labour Party
132. Sir Adam Thomson, Director, European Leadership Network
133. Dr John Walker, Senior Associate Fellow, European Leadership Network
134. Admiral the Lord (Alan) West of Spithead, former Chief of Defence Intelligence, First Sea Lord, Parliamentary under-secretary of state for Security, Counter-Terrorism and Cyber Security, Member of the House of Lords
135. Claudia Westwood, University Consortium Fellow
136. Nicholas Williams, Senior Associate Fellow, European Leadership Network

United States

137. Dr Lewis A. Dunn, Former U.S. Ambassador to the Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
138. Dr Roxane Farmanfarmaian, Senior Associate Fellow, European Leadership Network
139. Adam Hitchcock, Co-Founder, Sovereign Infrastructure Group
140. Morgan Jacobs, Programme Associate, Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars
141. Daniel Shapiro, University Consortium Fellow