



Members of the European Leadership Network with political and diplomatic backgrounds, Board members of the International Crisis Group, and Council Members from the European Council on Foreign Relations issue an open letter calling on Presidents Biden and Raisi to demonstrate flexibility to see their forthcoming negotiations on the Iran Nuclear Deal through to a successful conclusion, highlighting the non-proliferation benefits of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

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We write to express our growing concern that negotiations to restore Iranian compliance with and US return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) appear to have entered a period of stasis that threatens to undo the real and welcome progress made in recent months toward reinstating a non-proliferation achievement that is crucial for international peace and security.

At a time when transatlantic cooperation has become all the more critical to respond against Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, for US and European leaders to let slip the opportunity to defuse a nuclear crisis in the Middle East would be a grave mistake.

The JCPOA was a success. Persistent multilateral diplomacy, in which several of the undersigned were personally engaged, secured an agreement that advanced our shared non-proliferation goals. Preserving the benefits of a deal limiting Iran's stockpiles of enriched uranium, capping its levels of enrichment, and extending the timeline for the accumulation of fissile material that could be used for a potential weapon, all under the watchful eyes of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is the reason why European governments rejected the Trump administration's reckless decision to abandon the deal without a viable alternative, and have worked hard to keep the deal alive following the 2018 US withdrawal.

The strategy that the US followed for more than two years after this withdrawal, based on "maximum pressure" alone, yielded little but nuclear escalation, dangerous regional sparring and economic deprivation for the Iranian people. The legacy of this strategic error can today be measured in the tons of enriched uranium Iran has since accumulated, including uranium enriched to near-weapons grade; in the thousands of advanced centrifuges it is spinning; and, in the rapidly dwindling timeframe for Iran to reach a breakout capability. President Biden rightly identified a mutual return, by the US and Iran, to their respective commitments under the 2015 deal as a necessary course correction.

Since April 2021, negotiations in Vienna have, painstakingly but productively, forged a draft document that will reverse Iran's nuclear advances in return for relief from US sanctions imposed during the Trump administration that are inconsistent with the JCPOA. As the EU's Josep Borrell put it over a month ago, "a final text is essentially ready and on the table".

There are two possible scenarios ahead. In one, the US swiftly shows decisive leadership and requisite flexibility to resolve the remaining issues of political (not nuclear) disagreement with Tehran. In the other, the parties enter a state of corrosive stalemate, serving neither side's interests, that risk devolving into a cycle of increased nuclear tension, inevitably countered by the further application of coercive tools.

We know that the politics of this issue are difficult, particularly on issues like the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, which is reportedly the last lingering issue of contention. While the details are, of course, for US policymakers to determine, we believe that there are ways to provide the counterterrorism benefits of the current designation while still accommodating Iran's specific request, and consider it imperative that these be fully explored. For its part, Iran should not expect a nuclear deal to address broader areas of disagreement between Tehran and Washington. Both sides must approach this final phase of negotiation with an understanding that the strategic implications of failure would be grave and profound.

Based on our long experience in diplomacy and statecraft, we see a deal as eminently possible. Having come within touching distance, we urge President Biden and the Iranian leadership to demonstrate flexibility in tackling an issue of vital significance to the global non-proliferation regime and regional stability and see these negotiations through to a successful conclusion.

#### **Signatories:**

##### Czech Republic

1. **Jan Kavan**, former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, former President of the UNGA, and Chairman of the Board, Czech-Slovak-Iranian Chamber of Commerce (CSIOK)

##### Denmark

2. **Mogens Lykketoft**, former Foreign Minister and President of the UN 70th General Assembly

##### France

3. **G rard Araud**, former Permanent Representative of France to the UN, former Director-General for Political and Security Affairs
4. **Michel Duclos**, former Ambassador and Special Advisor, Institut Montaigne (Paris)
5. **Jean-David Levitte**, former Permanent Representative of France to the UN
6. **G n ral d'arm e a rienne (ret.) Bernard Norlain**, former Commander of Air Defence Command and Air Combat Command

##### Germany

7. **Wolfgang Ischinger**, former Ambassador and Chairman of the Munich Security Conference
8. **Joschka Fischer**, former Foreign Minister and former Vice-Chancellor
9. **Angela Kane**, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
10. **Karsten D. Voigt**, former Chairman of the German-Russian parliamentary group in the Bundestag and former President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
11. **General (ret.) Klaus Naumann**, former Chief of Staff and Chairman of the NATO Military Committee

##### Hungary

12. **Bal zs Csuday**, former Permanent Representative of Hungary to the UN (Vienna)

##### Italy

13. **Giancarlo Aragona**, former Ambassador and former Secretary-General of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
14. **General (ret.) Vincenzo Camporini**, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force and Chief of Defence General Staff
15. **Admiral (ret.) Giampaolo Di Paola**, former Minister of Defence
16. **Stefano Stefanini**, Ambassador (ret.), Executive Board of the European Leadership Network
17. **Dr Nathalie Tocci**, Director IAI and former Special Advisor to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
18. **Carlo Trezza**, former Ambassador for Disarmament and non-proliferation, Chairman of MTCR and UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board for Disarmament Affairs

##### Lithuania

19. **Vygaudas Usackas**, former Foreign Minister and former EU Ambassador to Russia and Afghanistan

##### Netherlands

20. **Prof. Klaas de Vries**, former Minister of Home Affairs

##### Norway

21. **Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland**, former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Deputy Chair of The Elders

## Poland

22. **Bogdan Klich**, former Minister of Defence and Member of the Senate of the Republic of Poland
23. **Andrzej Olechowski**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs
24. **Prof. Adam D. Rotfeld**, Warsaw University; former Minister of Foreign Affairs

## Serbia

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

## Spain

26. **Javier Solana**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Former High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and former NATO Secretary-General

## Sweden

27. **Carl Bildt**, former Prime Minister and former Foreign Minister
28. **Dr Hans Blix**, former Foreign Minister and former Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
29. **Rolf Ekéus**, former Chairman of the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, SIPRI, and former Ambassador of Sweden to the United States

## Turkey

30. **Vahit Erdem**, former Under Secretary of the Defence Industry and Former Vice President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
31. **Tacan Ildem**, former Assistant Secretary-General, NATO, former Ambassador
32. **Ahmet Üzümcü**, former Permanent Representative of Turkey to NATO and former Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

## United Kingdom

33. **The Rt. Hon. Bob Ainsworth**, former Defence Secretary
34. **Sir Tony Brenton**, former Ambassador to the Russian Federation (UK)
35. **Lord (Des) Browne of Ladyton**, former Defence Secretary and Chairman of the European Leadership Network
36. **The Rt. Hon. Alistair Burt**, former Minister of State for the Middle East at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
37. **Lord (David) Hannay of Chiswick**, former British Ambassador to the EU and to the UN
38. **Sir Nick Harvey**, former Member of Parliament and former Minister of State for the Armed Forces
39. **Lord (John) Kerr of Kinlochard**, Independent member of the UK House of Lords
40. **Lord (Tom) King of Bridgwater**, former UK Defence Secretary
41. **Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown**, President, Open Society Foundations, and former UN Deputy Secretary-General
42. **Madeleine Moon**, former Member of Parliament and former President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
43. **The Rt. Hon. Baroness (Pauline) Neville-Jones**, former Minister for Security and Counter-Terrorism
44. **General the Lord (David) Ramsbotham**, retired British Army officer, former Adjutant General and ADC General to Her Majesty the Queen
45. **The Rt. Hon. Jack Straw**, former Foreign Secretary
46. **The Rt. Hon. Lord (David) Triesman**, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and former General Secretary of the Labour Party

*The opinions articulated above represent the views of the signatories and do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Leadership Network or the entirety of its membership. The ELN aims to encourage debates that will help develop Europe's capacity to address the pressing foreign, defence, and security policy challenges of our time.*