

Statement from Nonproliferation Specialists in Support of Restoring Compliance with the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal

April 2022

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is an effective, verifiable agreement that successfully addressed a decades-long crisis over Iran's nuclear program and is a net plus for international and U.S. nuclear nonproliferation efforts. This multilateral nuclear deal was unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council in Resolution 2231, which urges full implementation of the JCPOA and calls upon member states to refrain from actions that undermine the agreement. We strongly encourage the prompt and successful conclusion of negotiations involving U.S. and Iranian diplomats in coordination with the other parties to the JCPOA to restore Iranian and U.S. compliance with the 2015 agreement.

The JCPOA dramatically reduces the risk posed by Iran's nuclear program and advances the security interests of the United States, its European partners, states in the region, and the entire international community. The JCPOA establishes stringent limitations on Iran's uranium enrichment program through the end of this decade and effectively eliminates Iran's ability to produce and separate plutonium.

Just as importantly, the JCPOA mandates unprecedented International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring, verification, and transparency measures that make it very likely that any possible future effort by Iran to pursue nuclear weapons, even a clandestine program, would be detected promptly. Taken together, the array of restrictions imposed on Iran would make it extremely difficult for Tehran to amass enough weapons-grade uranium for even one nuclear bomb without being detected if were to try to do so.

The relief from nuclear-related sanctions that Iran received in return for adhering to the nuclear restrictions provided a strong incentive for Tehran to follow through on its JCPOA obligations. Iran complied with the JCPOA for more than three years (from January 2016-May 2019) until the administration of then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the agreement in 2018 and reimposed and widened U.S. and extraterritorial sanctions on Iran in contravention of U.S. commitments.

The United States' exit from the JCPOA and its campaign to increase sanctions pressure on Iran ostensibly were intended to achieve a "better" or "more comprehensive deal." Tragically, it not only failed to produce the promised results; it also opened the way for Iran to take steps breach the JCPOA's nuclear limits and accelerate its capacity to produce bomb-grade nuclear material.

As a result of Trump administration policies, it is now estimated that the time it would take Iran to produce a significant quantity (25 kg) of bomb-grade uranium (enriched to 90 percent U-235) is down from more than a year under the JCPOA, to approximately one or two weeks today. Without the finalization and implementation of the draft plan to bring Iran and the United States back promptly and fully into compliance with the original terms of the JCPOA, Tehran's capacity to produce bomb-grade nuclear material will grow even further.

Restoring the limits on Iran's nuclear program will significantly increase (by many months) the time it would take Iran to produce a significant quantity of bomb grade material, which provides

the margin necessary for the international community to take effective action if Iran were to try to do so. Returning to the nuclear deal also puts the United States and other parties to the JCPOA on a stronger footing to pursue follow-on negotiations on a longer-term framework to contain Iran's nuclear program and create space to engage Iran on other areas of concern, such as regional tensions and its ballistic missile program.

Unfortunately, some in Congress are threatening to try to block President Joe Biden and European allies from implementing the steps necessary to bring Iran back under the nuclear limits set by the JCPOA. Repeating the failed strategy pursued by the Trump administration is misguided, irresponsible, and dangerous as it would increase the danger that Iran would become a threshold nuclear-weapon state.

A prompt return to mutual compliance with the JCPOA is the best available way to deny Iran the ability to quickly produce bomb-grade nuclear material. It would reinstate full IAEA international monitoring and verification of Iran's nuclear facilities, thus ensuring early warning if Iran were to try to acquire nuclear weapons—and possibly become the second state in the Middle East (in addition to Israel) with such an arsenal.

List of Endorsers*

James Acton, Co-Director of the Nuclear Policy Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Emma Belcher, President, Ploughshares Fund

Rachel Bronson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Des Browne, Member, House of Lords, and former UK Secretary of State for Defence

Susan F. Burk, former Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation

John Carlson, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, and former Director-General of the Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office

Toby Dalton, Co-Director of the Nuclear Policy Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Kelsey Davenport, Director for Nonproliferation Policy, Arms Control Association

Tara Drozdenko, Director, Global Security Program, Union of Concerned Scientists

Bryan Early, Associate Dean for Research and Associate Professor of Political Science, University at Albany, State University of New York

Tytti Erästö, Senior Researcher, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

Dina Esfandiary, Senior Advisor, Middle East and North Africa Program, International Crisis Group

Marc Finaud, Head of Arms Proliferation, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, and former French Diplomat

Mark Fitzpatrick, former acting Deputy U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Nonproliferation

Nancy Gallagher, Director of the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, University of Maryland

Ellie Geranmayeh, Deputy Director, Middle East & North Africa Programme, European Council on Foreign Relations

Stephen Heintz, President and CEO, Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Frank N. von Hippel, Professor of Public and International Affairs Emeritus, Princeton University, and former Assistant Director for National Security at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

Angela Kane, former United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Togzhan Kassenova, Senior Fellow at the Center for Policy Research, University at Albany, State University of New York, and former Member of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters*

R. Scott Kemp, Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and former Science Advisor in the Office of the Special Advisor for Nonproliferation and Arms Control at the U.S. Department of State

Laura Kennedy, Board Member, Arms Control Association, and former U.S. Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director, Arms Control Association

Jeffrey Knopf, Professor, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey

George Lopez, Hesburgh Professor of Peace Studies Emeritus, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, and former Vice President of the U.S. Institute of Peace and Member of the U.N. Panel of Experts on the DPRK

Rüdiger Lüdeking, Ambassador (ret.), and former Deputy Commissioner of the German Federal Government for Arms Control and Disarmament

Jessica Mathews, Distinguished Fellow and former President, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and former Deputy to the Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs

Oliver Meier, Senior Researcher, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg

Nicholas Miller, Associate Professor, Dartmouth College

Trita Parsi, Executive Vice President, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

Ambassador Thomas Pickering, former U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Russia, India, Israel, El Salvador, Nigeria, and Jordan

Paul Pillar, Nonresident Senior Fellow, Georgetown University, and former National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia

William Potter, Professor of Nonproliferation Studies, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey

Stewart Prager, Professor, Program on Science and Global Security, Princeton University

Tariq Rauf, former Head of Verification and Security Policy Coordination in the Office reporting to the Director General at the International Atomic Energy Agency

Joel Rubin, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State

Sahil Shah, Policy Fellow, European Leadership Network

Barbara Slavin, Director of the Future of Iran Initiative, Atlantic Council

Nikolai Sokov, Senior Fellow, Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Greg Thielmann, Board Member, Arms Control Association, and former Office Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the U.S. Department of State

Sir Adam Thomson, Director, European Leadership Network, and former UK Ambassador to NATO

John Tierney, Executive Director, Council for a Livable World, and former Congressman from Massachusetts (1997-2015)

Ali Vaez, Director of the Iran Project, International Crisis Group, and former Senior Political Affairs Officer at the United Nations Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

Aiden Warren, Associate Professor, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

**Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.*