

Leaders of Europe: Defend the INF Treaty

President Trump's threat to withdraw the U.S. from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty marks a dangerous escalation on the path to a 21st century U.S.-Russian Cold War.

The INF Treaty, for which millions of people around the world fought and won, was negotiated in 1987 and marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War. It led to the elimination and renunciation of future deployments of all U.S. and Russian nuclear and conventional ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 km. This dramatically reduced the danger of Europe becoming the primary theater for nuclear war.

Abandoning the INF Treaty, combined with the possible expiration of the New START Treaty in 2021, will eliminate all nuclear arms agreements between the two countries that possess more than 90% of the world's nuclear weapons, opening the way for an unrestrained and dangerous nuclear arms race.

Mr. Trump's threat to abandon yet another treaty is an expression of his commitment to U.S. world dominance, including weakening and containing China. It builds on the recent history of NATO expansion; plans to deploy "more usable" nuclear weapons; the withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; and the commitment to develop and deploy a new generation of U.S. nuclear weapons, their delivery systems and missile defenses.

President Putin has responded to these U.S. steps by reiterating Russia's commitment to maintain the Mutual Assured Destruction "balance of forces" with the U.S. Already Russian nuclear-capable missiles have been deployed to Kaliningrad, at the edge of Europe, and Putin has threatened to match any U.S. missile deployments in Europe.

We urgently appeal for negotiations to preserve and reinforce the INF Treaty; for the adoption of and adherence to no first use doctrines; for credible commitments to fulfill the nuclear powers' Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty disarmament obligations; and for nuclear arsenal reductions with savings redirected to address essential human needs. China should be involved in future INF-related negotiations.

We call on all countries to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted by the UN in 2017, which offers a solid international framework toward the elimination of nuclear weapons.

To avert a new nuclear arms race, we call on people and nations throughout the world to use all political and diplomatic means available to defend the INF Treaty and to work for a nuclear-free world.

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Act now in the name of human survival!