



Initiated by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Church and Peace, International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility (INES), International Peace Bureau (IPB), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Pax Christi International, and Quaker Council for European Affairs

Dear President Putin,

We are writing on behalf of a number of civil society organisations in Europe concerning the dangers presented by the presence of nuclear weapons and we are also writing a similar letter to President-elect Biden of the United States of America (copy attached).

Like the vast majority of the global population, we look forward to a time when nuclear weapons have no place anywhere in the world, and, as a step towards that, we campaign for Europe to join other regions as a nuclearweaponfree zone.

There is now an urgent need for a real and meaningful process of détente with the United States and with other countries in NATO. Whatever logic there appeared to be in a nuclear weapon mutual deterrence during the Cold War has now disappeared and it is time now for states to work together in good faith against the common threats of climate change and pandemic. To do this will require an international climate of trust and understanding and a retreat from confrontation and the imminent danger of a possible nuclear war either by design or accident. However, the process of negotiating nuclear weapons out of existence will be a major task for your administration.

Your Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has recently confirmed that you are in intensive contact with the Americans regarding strategic stability problems. We all know that a critical first step must be for you and the United States to extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), for the 5th February 2021 is the very last day when such an extension can be agreed before the treaty lapses. The extension of New START by you and the new US President would be a tremendous boost to détente. Indeed, it would open the possibility of moving towards the end of nuclear weapons which, like the climate emergency, threaten the very existence of humankind.

We commend to you the taking of a first step. Who knows how far along the path you may travel? However, like all journeys, this will begin with that first step.

Yours sincerely,