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Seventy-sixth year****General and complete disarmament: nuclear disarmament****Letter dated 2 March 2021 from the Permanent Representative of
the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council**

Further to our letters dated 16 August 2017 ([S/2017/720](#)), 18 April 2019 ([A/73/846-S/2019/339](#)), 26 November 2019 ([A/74/565-S/2019/909](#)), 30 November 2018 ([A/73/644-S/2018/1075](#)), 16 March 2020 ([A/74/752-S/2020/212](#)), 28 May 2020 ([S/2020/454](#)) and 9 June 2020 ([S/2020/522](#)), as well as numerous previous communications on the implementation of paragraph 3 of annex B to Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), I have the honour to once again reiterate the position of the Russian Federation on this issue in connection with the letter dated 18 February 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of France, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations ([S/2021/163](#)).

To our deep regret, our European counterparts are once again attempting to spread unsubstantiated claims about Iran's alleged violation of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). Like before, their arguments are based on a flawed assumption that the Islamic Republic of Iran has both the capacity and political will to develop nuclear weapons and build up systems for their delivery.

However, in reality, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been the State most verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) since the adoption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Iran has never possessed nuclear weapons, nor does it possess these weapons now, nor, we expect, will it ever possess them in the future. Even when the integrity of the "nuclear deal" was challenged by the actions of another Member State, Iran exercised restraint and demonstrated determination to uphold the non-proliferation regime, including through strict compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Iranian leadership has stated on numerous occasions that the possession of nuclear weapons, which are incompatible with Islamic fundamentals and commands, is not its aim. Iran continues to be engaged in cooperation with IAEA, which enables the Agency to carry out verification and monitoring activities on its territory.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a member of the United Nations, is fully entitled to the advantages of space science and technology. In resolution [74/82](#), the General Assembly expressed its conviction that "space science and technology and



their applications, including satellite communications, Earth observation systems and satellite navigation technologies, provide indispensable tools for viable long-term solutions for sustainable development and can contribute more effectively to efforts to promote the development of all countries and regions of the world”, and also stressed in that regard “the need to harness the benefits of space technology towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

None of the existing international instruments and mechanisms, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Missile Technology Control Regime, either directly or implicitly prohibits Iran from developing missile and space programmes. Furthermore, the Missile Technology Control Regime restrictions are not applicable to Iran, as it is not a party to this Regime. The references to Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) in the context of the Missile Technology Control Regime are also completely irrelevant, since this resolution was never meant to contain Iran’s missile programme.

The interest of Iran in mastering space technology is in line with the global trend, with other Member States increasingly active in this field, so attempts to single out Iranian activity and directly place it in a military context are biased and misleading. This is further illustrated by a clear absence of material evidence, since the only argument proposed by our European counterparts is that the methodology used by Iran is “rather unusual” in the context of its alleged peaceful space programme.

We would like to once again remind them that paragraph 7 (a) of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) stipulates that resolution [1929 \(2010\)](#) in its entirety, including paragraph 9 that prohibited Iran from undertaking “any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons”, has been terminated. However, even at times when this resolution was in force, the assumptions of the Panel of Experts gained no consolidated support either in the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1737 \(2006\)](#) or in the Security Council. The role of the Panel was purely technical, while its reports never constituted a product of global consensus. Therefore, the references to its report dated 4 June 2012 are far-fetched and cannot serve as either political or legal substantiation for such a serious claim as an alleged “breach” of annex B to Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).

We continue to be alarmed by the attempts of certain Member States to distort the nature and scope of the Missile Technology Control Regime, which is obviously considered by them not as an informal political understanding between 35 States on export control issues but as an instrument that restricts all countries in the world, apart from themselves, from developing space capabilities. Moreover, through such actions, these Member States are implicitly accusing all other non-nuclear-weapon States that are developing their own missile and space programmes of effectively designing delivery systems capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

In this context, we would like to reiterate that the category I parameters of the annex to the Missile Technology Control Regime are nothing but a reference tool for exporting States and were never intended to be used in the context of resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action included, to determine whether or not certain ballistic missiles are designed to be capable of carrying nuclear weapons. It is well known that such types of missiles should include certain specific features and, up until now, no evidence of their existence on Iranian ballistic missiles or space launch vehicles has ever been presented in any of the communications to the Security Council in connection with paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).

Russia attaches utmost importance to the Missile Technology Control Regime and is committed to full implementation of its provisions. We expect that our

European colleagues will also duly and consistently do the same while refraining from loose interpretation of the nature of the Missile Technology Control Regime.

In this regard, we would like to stress that the reference in the communication to the Council from the above-mentioned Member States to category I systems as being “the systems of most concern” is a deliberate misstatement. Instead, the Missile Technology Control Regime guiding principles clearly state that the category I systems are the “items of greatest sensitivity”, which is a substantially different meaning.

In addition, we strongly oppose the assessments of the defensive needs of Iran as “self-proclaimed”, since they are dismissive of its legitimate right to self-defence and violate the principle of common and indivisible security enshrined in outcome documents of the Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences adopted by consensus.

Given the above and, since no viable information to the contrary has ever been provided to the Security Council, the Russian Federation continues to proceed from its previous assumption that Iran is respecting in good faith the call addressed to it in paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) to refrain from activities related to ballistic missiles that are designed to be capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

We would be grateful for the circulation of the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 103 (b), and of the Security Council and its full and thorough reflection in the upcoming report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).

(Signed) Vassily **Nebenzia**
