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**Letter dated 20 April 2023 from the Permanent Representative of  
the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the  
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to convey herewith a position paper on the undermining by the United States of the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation system (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 99, and of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Vassily Nebenzia



**Annex to the letter dated 20 April 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

[Original: Russian]

*Position paper*

**On the undermining by the United States of the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation system**

In an effort to secure global dominance, the United States has invested itself in the pursuit of decisive military-strategic superiority. To this end, Washington, with the support of its allies, has been undermining and destroying the pillars of the international security architecture, including the basic elements of the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation system, which it views as an impediment, in an attempt to replace it with some kind of rules-based order. The main lines of action in that regard are described below.

**Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty**

Between 26 May 1972 and 13 June 2002, the open-ended Treaty between the USSR and the United States on the limitation of anti-ballistic missile systems (ABM Treaty) served as one of the most important pillars of the system of maintaining strategic stability. Since the 1983 Strategic Defense Initiative programme, the United States has consistently worked to dismantle this cornerstone agreement.

On 26 September 1997, a package of agreements on the demarcation of strategic and non-strategic missile defence systems was signed in New York. In 2000, those agreements were ratified by the State Duma along with the Strategic Arms Reduction (START II) Treaty signed in 1993. The United States, in turn, refused to ratify the START II treaty, taken as a package with its 1997 protocol, and the New York ABM treaties, putting an end to those agreements.

Russia has consistently advocated preserving the ABM Treaty. Having failed to elicit a constructive response from the United States, we raised this issue in the United Nations General Assembly, which, at its fifty-fourth, fifty-fifth and fifty-sixth sessions, from 1999 to 2001, voted by overwhelming majority to adopt resolutions in support of preserving and complying with the Treaty. The United States simply ignored the opinion of the international community.

Announcing the United States withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, President George W. Bush justified this step, saying that “the Treaty prevents us from developing effective defences” against “rogue states”. However, the United States claimed that there was no threat to strategic stability, because, according to George W. Bush, the “hostility that once led both our countries to keep thousands of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert” had disappeared between Russia and the United States.

However, in practice, Washington’s plans and actions have marked a giant step backward for global security. The United States missile defence architecture deployed around the world is fundamentally changing the strategic balance of power in the field of offensive weapons, and is intended to ensure the overwhelming military superiority of the United States over other States, creating instability in the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific regions, provoking a nuclear missile arms race, and blocking efforts towards further phased nuclear disarmament.

Even after Washington had brought down the ABM treaty, Russia made exhaustive efforts to eliminate the risks of a strategic imbalance caused by the development and build-up of United States missile defence capabilities. We even offered to send the United States information from our radar stations. We put forward an initiative to enshrine the “non-targeting” of the United States missile defence system against Russia in a legally binding document and to provide for an appropriate verification regime.

The United States and NATO found every way to avoid substantive discussion of the ABM Treaty, and then, entirely under the pretext of the situation in Ukraine, unilaterally halted strategic dialogue with Russia.

### **Withdrawal from the INF Treaty**

Like the ABM Treaty, the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty), signed on 8 December 1987, was open-ended and could have contributed to maintaining international security and strategic stability for many years to come. However, this was not part of the plans of the United States, which pursued as much freedom of choice as possible in the selection of methods of applying force to countries designated by Washington as opponents and adversaries. As Russia has pointed out, with factual support, the United States had begun as far back as the late 1990s to take great liberties with its commitments under the INF Treaty.

In particular, since 1999 the United States has been using ballistic target missiles with characteristics identical to those of ground-based intermediate- and shorter-range missiles, making it possible to maintain and develop the appropriate technological capabilities, as well as to practise the combat use of missiles banned under the INF Treaty. Since the early 2000s, the United States has been using attack unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that fall entirely within the definition of a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) contained in the INF Treaty, action blatantly contrary to the objectives of the Treaty. Meanwhile, in 2003 the United States unilaterally effectively terminated the work of the Special Verification Commission for the Treaty, a forum in which Russia had persistently raised the issues mentioned. The United States indicated that it was unwilling to continue discussing Russia’s concerns.

Since 2014, the United States has been deploying Mk-41 universal launchers, which can launch Tomahawk medium-range cruise missiles and other strike weapons, as part of the Aegis Ashore facilities established in Europe.

We consistently conveyed our concerns regarding these issues to the United States, but it called them “spurious” and refused to discuss them.

Ignoring Russia’s protests, Washington unleashed a propaganda campaign of unsubstantiated accusations against Russia, alleging that it had violated the INF Treaty. The United States then proceeded to use that as a justification for scrapping the Treaty. The United States presented the case as if the Russian 9M729 multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) had a range of more than 500 kilometres, something which the INF Treaty prohibited. The United States rejected our demands for concrete evidence, as well as our offers to demonstrate the missile itself. Washington presented an ultimatum, demanding that destruction of the missiles, their launch facilities and ancillary equipment be carried out, under strict United States supervision.

Notably, John Bolton, who served as National Security Advisor to President Trump, explicitly told Russia that the United States move to withdraw from the Treaty was not an “invitation to negotiate” its fate. He said publicly that the “INF is a relic

of the Cold War”. The United States emphasized its concern at the presence of land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in the arsenals of China, and of some other countries (Iran, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, etc.). In public statements, United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also listed the factor of China, Iran and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea having land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles among the reasons pushing Washington to denounce the INF Treaty.

On 2 August 2019, the United States unilaterally withdrew from the INF Treaty. The Treaty ceased to apply, and the Pentagon sharply intensified the development of intermediate-range and shorter-range land-based missiles already under way at the time. The official White House press release on the subject hypocritically stated “because the United States scrupulously complied with its obligations to the INF Treaty, these programs are in the early stages”.

In reality, however, after the final scrapping of the Treaty, the United States immediately began field-testing weapons belonging to classes previously banned under the INF Treaty in an obvious and openly provocative manner.

In particular, still in August 2019, the United States military launched from a land-based Mk-41 launcher a Tomahawk-family cruise missile which hit a target over 500 kilometres away. That action fully confirmed the validity of our accusations of direct violation by the United States of the INF Treaty while it was still in force, through the deployment of Mk-41 launchers on land in Europe as part of the Aegis Ashore facilities, which were supposedly purely missile defence systems.

In December 2019, a ballistic missile presumed to have been equipped with a guided vehicle was test-fired at Vandenberg Air Force Base to a distance of over 500 kilometres. The device is thought to have been assembled using components of target missiles, confirming the validity of another Russian concern that had been ignored by the United States for many years.

Subsequently, the United States began testing ground-based missiles for specific advanced intermediate-range and shorter-range systems. Work is currently continuing on a wide range of such systems. Furthermore, senior United States military officials have been emphasizing the need for the rapid deployment of land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in Europe, against Russia, and in the Asia-Pacific region, to counter China.

In addition, the moratorium on the deployment of land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles established unilaterally and at the highest level by Russia in February 2019 for as long as similar United States-made weapons were absent from the respective regions was never met by reciprocal action on the part of the United States and NATO. Our proposal for bringing the matter to a conclusion, which included the resolution of counter-concerns in this area, was arrogantly declared “not credible”.

The prospect of a constructive United States response emerged only after we proposed, at the end of 2021, a security guarantee initiative aimed at a comprehensive political and diplomatic settlement of the issues at the root of Russia-United States and Russia-NATO tensions, seeking to reduce to a minimum the potential for Euro-Atlantic conflict and to create reliable and genuinely indivisible security in the region, built on collective foundations. However, the United States, with the full support of its NATO allies, openly and unequivocally rejected the key elements of the Russian package initiative, and tried to use its agreement on a narrowly focused “post-INF” dialogue as a bargaining chip in “horse-trading” on the Ukrainian issue.

## **Weakening and scrapping of the START Treaty**

The United States policy of destabilization has also put a question mark over the fate of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START) of 8 April 2010. The Treaty is vital to the maintenance of strategic stability.

The statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry of 21 February 2023 on the suspension of the START Treaty, issued as an official document of the Security Council and the General Assembly, gave a detailed assessment of the disappointing state of affairs around the Treaty resulting from the destructive actions of the United States in connection with that Treaty, and more generally, because of its pursuit of a policy of comprehensive weakening of Russia's security and of political and economic "strangulation" of our country.

Attention was drawn to the following negative factors which are undermining the full functioning of the Treaty as a result of United States actions:

- The extremely hostile United States policy of undermining Russia's national security, running counter to the fundamental principles and understandings enshrined in the preamble to the START Treaty (the principle of indivisibility of security, and the commitment to working together "to forge a new strategic relationship based on mutual trust, openness, predictability, and cooperation" between Russia and the United States), and without which the Treaty would not have been concluded; that policy has in effect resulted in a radical change in circumstances compared to those that existed when the Treaty was concluded;
- For many years Washington has ignored the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic missile defence figuring in the preamble to the Treaty, and the United States has taken action that clearly conflicts with the declaration on missile defence made by Russia when it signed and ratified the Treaty; that declaration is founded in the understanding in the preamble to the Treaty which holds that the Treaty can operate and be viable only when there is no qualitative and quantitative build-up of United States missile defence systems;
- The years-long and direct violation by Washington of the central provisions of the START Treaty on quantitative limits on the armaments of the parties, in the form of the illegitimate unilateral removal from accountability under the Treaty of more than 100 United States strategic offensive arms, which Washington declared to be converted without giving Russia an opportunity to reliably verify the results of such conversion against the requirements of the START Treaty (i.e. to implement the procedure explicitly provided for in the Treaty), or renamed so that they no longer fell within the Treaty definitions.
- Washington's imposition of anti-Russian restrictions that have disrupted the operability of the Treaty's standard procedures for verification, thus blocking Russia's ability to conduct inspections on United States territory without hindrance and on an equal basis, and creating unilateral advantages for the United States which it has attempted to consolidate as a *fait accompli*;
- Washington's provision of military-technical and information-intelligence assistance to the puppet regime in Kiev for strikes on Russian strategic offensive arms facilities declared under the Treaty.

We have repeatedly shared these assessments with the United States and have constantly called for Washington to take steps to rectify the situation taking into account the concerns outlined by Russia. Instead, however, Washington has continued to deliberately take malicious steps to undermine the security of Russia.

Taking all these circumstances together, Russia has been forced to conclude that the United States has committed a significant violation of the Treaty, that is, a violation that has a critical impact on the realization of the object and purpose of the Treaty.

Accordingly, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, announced the suspension of the Treaty by our country in his address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 21 February 2023.

This decision can be reversed. That would require Washington to demonstrate political will, halt its efforts to undermine Russia's national security, and make good-faith efforts to bring about a general de-escalation and to create conditions for the resumption of the full functioning of the Treaty, thereby ensuring its full viability.

### **Destructive position with regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty**

The United States is among the countries whose position has prevented this important Treaty from entering into force. Back in 1999, Congress refused to ratify the Treaty (signed by the United States on 24 September 1996), arguing that such a step was necessary to ensure the reliability of the country's nuclear arsenal. Since then, the United States authorities have failed to secure ratification of the Treaty, although they have time and again expressed support for it.

The Trump Administration radically revised the United States position on the Treaty, abandoning the goal of achieving its entry into force, and even announcing a readiness to resume nuclear testing. Although President Biden formally reversed the decision of his predecessor, Washington has so far taken no steps towards ratification of the Treaty, citing some "serious obstacles".

### **Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones**

In a course of action similar to that taken with the Test-Ban Treaty, Washington has been in no hurry to secure ratification of protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zone agreements signed by the United States. The only case in which the United States has ratified the relevant protocols is that of the first such agreement, the Treaty of Tlatelolco (on nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean). However, the issue of ratification of the protocols to the other similar agreements (the Treaties of Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Semipalatinsk) is not, as far as we can tell, a priority for Washington.

### **Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**

The United States continues to play a destructive role in the NPT review process.

At the 2015 Review Conference, the adoption of the outcome document was blocked by three Western delegations – the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. They could not accept the absence from the section on the Middle East (drafted on the basis of proposals from Russia) of veto power for the three co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution – the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States – over the holding of a Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction (this provision would have allowed the blocking of the Conference if necessary, something which was important for Israel).

At the tenth Review Conference (August 2022), the United States, together with its allies, invoking the situation in Ukraine, introduced into the outcome document language that was obviously unacceptable to us, being anti-Russian and irrelevant to

the objectives of the Treaty. This created a toxic atmosphere at the Conference, and forced the Russian delegation to block its final report.

### **Manipulation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**

A striking example of the undermining of the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation system by Washington and its allies is the de facto privatization of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which resulted in 2018 in the OPCW Technical Secretariat being given the “attributive” functions of identifying those responsible for the use of chemical weapons and in that structure being turned into a tool to serve the foreign policy interests of Western countries. It is through the efforts of the Euro-Atlantic allies, with the connivance and even direct assistance of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, that evidence is being fabricated of the alleged use of toxic chemicals and full-fledged chemical warfare agents by Damascus, that various kinds of insinuations are being spread about the “Skripal case”, the tragic incident involving British subjects Dawn Sturges and Charlie Rowley, and the alleged “poisoning” of Alexander Navalny.

### **Refusal to elaborate a Verification Protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)**

Between 1995 and 2001, a draft protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was developed with the direct participation of United States experts. It provided for mandatory declaration of certain activities of a biological nature, measures to verify compliance with the Convention, including site visits and investigations of any suspected violations of the Convention, and measures to improve cooperation and scientific and technical exchanges. However, following the coming to power of the Administration of George W. Bush during the twenty-fourth session of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts of the BTWC States Parties in July 2001, the United States unilaterally blocked continuation of work on the draft Protocol to the Convention. Since then, and up to the present time, Washington has consistently opposed any attempt to resume work on a legally binding Protocol with an effective verification mechanism for the Convention.

### **Withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty**

The Open Skies Treaty (1 January 2002–18 December 2021) had proven to be a useful confidence-building tool in the military sphere. On 22 November 2020, the United States, citing “violations” by the Russian Federation, withdrew from the Treaty.

Russia was prepared to agree to maintain the Treaty on the condition that the NATO countries that remained in it would provide guarantees that information obtained during surveillance flights over Russia would not be transferred to non-participating States (that is, the United States), and that they would confirm that Russian surveillance flights over the territories of participating States, including United States facilities on their national territories, could be conducted unhindered. Russia’s efforts to preserve the Treaty have not been reciprocated in Washington or in the capitals of United States allies.

On 27 May 2021, the United States Department of State officially notified the Russian Foreign Ministry that the United States had no intention of returning to the Treaty. On 18 December 2021, Russia officially withdrew from the Treaty.

### **Devaluation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)**

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) was signed in Paris on 19 November 1990 and entered into force on 9 November 1992. It was a sufficiently effective and efficient instrument to enhance European security in the early 1990s, provided a balance in the forces of the participating States of the two politico-military alliances, the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at reduced levels, and limited their ability to deploy their conventional weapons along the line of contact.

Since the early 1990s, following the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, the collapse of the USSR and the ensuing aggressive expansion of NATO to Russia's borders in line with Washington's policy of building a unipolar world, the CFE Treaty has become largely outdated and out of touch with reality.

In order to encourage Western countries to change their attitudes towards Euro-security, the Treaty was suspended with regard to the Russian Federation in 2007. However, the position of the Western participants remained unchanged. Since 2007, the conventional weapons situation in Europe has deteriorated markedly. The United States and its allies are pursuing a line of military confrontation with Russia, fraught with the most catastrophic consequences.

### **Export controls**

We have noted the intensification of United States efforts to shape the parameters of international cooperation in the field of dual-use high technology transfers to suit Washington. The focus is on replacing traditional multilateral export control regimes with new flexible mechanisms that allow the United States to promote its interests, "rules" and restrictions without regard to consensus and without being constrained by non-proliferation arrangements.

Having failed to achieve within the Missile Technology Control Regime a relaxation of export controls on certain categories of heavy UAVs, in July 2020 Washington changed its national legislation to clear the way for its UAVs to enter the global market. This confirmed the willingness of the United States to renege on its commitments if they no longer serve its political and economic interests.

Since 2014, the United States has politicized the work of the Wassenaar Arrangement, ignoring consensus recommendations on avoiding destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons, strict controls on re-exports, transfers of MANPADS, and so on. Washington is seeking to reshape the activities of the Arrangement to suit its own opportunistic concerns, including that of exerting pressure on "undesirable" countries, and of creating barriers to legitimate cooperation in the field of high technology. The United States is using the Wassenaar Arrangement control lists as a tool for unilateral sanctions, thereby undermining the goals and objectives of the Arrangement and of export controls in general.

During the comprehensive review of the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) in 2022, the United States sought to unjustifiably expand the mandate of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) by turning it into a supranational body to monitor States' non-proliferation policies, with intrusive powers and attributive functions, allowing it to reach verdicts on States' failure to comply with their obligations. It was only the threat of a "veto" that made it possible to ward off such moves and preserve the basic principles of the Committee's operation for the next ten years.