



October 18, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

We are a group of 25 former foreign ministers who have just met for consultations on transatlantic relations and other key international security issues. We have been closely following the debate in the United States over the Iran nuclear agreement and we understand that it is now up to Congress to maintain U.S. compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We urge you to uphold the agreement, and not to take any unilateral action that seeks to expand, alter or renegotiate the terms of the JCPOA.

While President Trump has refused to certify Iran's compliance with the JCPOA, top national security officials in his administration have affirmed that Iran is meeting its commitments. Those conclusions are shared by the other parties to the agreement – Britain, China, France, Germany, the European Union, and Russia. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which is responsible for monitoring and verifying the JCPOA, has issued eight reports since 2015 documenting that Iran has taken the steps required under the agreement to limit its nuclear capabilities, while submitting to an intrusive inspection regime.

A unilateral withdrawal from the agreement would have far-reaching adverse consequences for the security of the United States and America's standing in the world. Most immediately, it would give Iran justification to kick out inspectors and restart its

nuclear program. Under such a scenario, it would be impossible for the international community to reassemble the sanctions regime which had previously constrained Iran. The United States would be left with the unpalatable choice of accepting a nuclear-armed Iran or pursuing far less effective actions on its own, in isolation from the international community.

With the other nations who are parties to the JCPOA strongly supporting its continuation, a U.S. withdrawal would also create a rift in the transatlantic alliance, threatening one of the pillars of international stability. In addition, withdrawal would undermine U.S. credibility in future negotiations over other issues, as countries would no longer view the United States as a reliable or predictable party. The termination of the JCPOA would make it virtually impossible to reach any diplomatic agreement with North Korea, whose nuclear weapons program is a pressing international threat.

Absent evidence that Iran is failing to comply with the agreement, there is simply no justification for the United States to walk away from the nuclear deal. The Trump administration has argued that Iran's destabilizing activities in the region, including its sponsorship of terrorism and its support for the regimes in Syria and Yemen, violate the "spirit" of the JCPOA. But what matters in this case is whether Iran is following the verifiable, enforceable details of the nuclear agreement. According to all credible assessments, it is.

As troubled as we are by Iran's destabilizing actions, these issues were not a part of the negotiations, which focused solely on Iran's nuclear program. There are many tools still at America's disposal to pressure Iran on its malign activities, and the JCPOA actually constrains the Iranian threat by preventing it from backing up those activities with a nuclear deterrent. Allowing the agreement to unravel — including through unilateral steps to expand, alter or renegotiate the JCPOA — would make the Middle East more dangerous, not less.

Each one of us has participated in international negotiations where the United States was a key participant. We know from experience that the world counts on the United States to live up to its commitments. If the United States loses its credibility, the consequences for its security, and the security of its allies, would be disastrous. Given these grave implications, we urge you to preserve this agreement, while working with America's friends and allies to strengthen the international consensus against a nuclear-armed Iran.

Thank you for your consideration,

Madeleine Albright
United States

Lloyd Axworthy
Canada

Mayu Avila
El Salvador

Mohamed Benaissa
Morocco

Shlomo Ben-Ami
Israel

Erik Derycke
Belgium

Lamberto Dini
Italy

Alexander Downer
Australia

Jan Eliasson
Sweden

Benita Ferrero-Waldner
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Joschka Fischer
Germany

Jaime Gama
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Daniel Mitov
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Surin Pitsuwan
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CC:

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