



**INTERACTION  
COUNCIL**

**High-Level Expert Group Meeting**

**Chairman's Report on the High-Level Expert Group Meeting**

**“Bringing Peace and Security  
to a Divided World:  
Opportunities and Challenges”**

**Chaired by  
The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien**

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Toronto, Canada**

## **Introduction**

In January 2016, the Islamic Republic of Iran returned to full participation in the world economy following the adoption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA framework encourages Iran to abandon some components of its nuclear program in exchange for relief from long-term sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations.

The issue of nuclear non-proliferations is, in the view of the InterAction Council, a pressing and persistent concern. As such, the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Co-Chair of the InterAction Council, brought together a group of experts to discuss, “Iran and the New Middle East” on Tuesday, 19 January 2016, at Massey College, University of Toronto, in Toronto, Canada, to deliberate on the JCPOA and consider its possible impact.

The experts who gathered agreed that the impact of the deal was substantial not only for Iran and the Middle East, but the peace and security of the world. They drew links between the opportunities and challenges offered by the JCPOA not only on Iran, but on numerous peace and security issues, including: nuclear proliferation, North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, the West’s relationship with Russia, combatting Isis, and addressing the situation in Syria. The flow of the discussion illustrated once again that the world is increasingly interconnected.

## **Nuclear Non-Proliferation**

To the minds of many, the issue of nuclear non-proliferation ended with the Cold War. Nuclear weapons were central to the super power rivalry. So prominent was the public discourse surrounding “the bomb,” during those years that many assumed that after the Cold War the issue was no longer a concern. However, nuclear weapons continue to be a threat to humanity: As the 2010 Hiroshima Declaration of the InterAction Council stated, “As long as anyone has nuclear weapons, others will seek them.”

The JCPOA has created another opportunity to direct global attention towards nuclear weapons. The adoption of the JCPOA provides a call to action to address the nuclear agenda more broadly. An additional opportunity exists in March 2016 when Barack Obama, President of the United States, hosts the 4<sup>th</sup> Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC.

Much attention is given to the “horizontal” increase in nuclear weapons capabilities--that is, that additional states are gaining these resources--more attention needs to be given to a “vertical increase.” A vertical increase describes nuclear states increasing their present nuclear capabilities. This is currently being done under the guise of “modernization,” whereby nuclear powers acquire new and more sophisticated weapons systems, arguing that their

existing systems are out of date. Both horizontal and vertical proliferation needs to be addressed. The world needs less, rather than more nuclear weapon capabilities.

The JCPOA also created elevated standards for monitoring Iran's supply chain for acquiring nuclear materials. In the words of one expert, "... the provision [in the JCPOA] for a dedicated procurement channel to monitor and approve Iran's acquisition from external sources of nuclear-related materials and technology... points to the potential for a significantly raised nuclear transparency bar." What would such a raised nuclear transparency bar look like?

One means to increase transparency is the long considered Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. It is crucial that this treaty be immediately adopted.

However, it is not sufficient to establish agreements; enforcement and implementation of the agreements is essential for the global nuclear non-proliferation system to be a success. To be effective the agencies responsible for verification and monitoring need the financial and human resources to do their important work. In particular, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) must be supported with additional resources.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty should be adopted and implemented;
2. The United States and China must be encouraged to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty immediately.
3. Programs to modernize nuclear weapons must be abandoned and arms control negotiations be pursued not only to reduce the level of existing weapons, but to put in place measures against the production of new ones;
4. States possessing nuclear weapons must make significant progress to achieve nuclear disarmament as called for in Article VI of the NPT, the current pace of which could undermine the confidence on this important treaty by non-nuclear states;
5. Nations participating in defensive treaties that ultimately rely on nuclear weapons should start to define the nature of their alliances in a way that eventually excludes any reliance on nuclear weapons. As a first step, states should immediately agree to the doctrine of "no first use" as outlined in the 2010 *Hiroshima Declaration*;
6. The IAEA and other agencies involved in the monitoring and verification of nuclear resources should be better supported through additional financial and human resources so they can adequately verify compliance, with additional resources made available for collecting and sharing intelligence information; and

7. Initiatives to increase public awareness of nuclear proliferation should be actively pursued.

## **North Korea**

At the forefront of the discussion was North Korea, who is developing a nuclear arsenal. The return of North Korea to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty must remain the international community's main objective. Failure to achieve this goal undermines confidence in the existing system to prevent and remedy the spread of nuclear weapons. As one participant asked rhetorically, "If the non-proliferation system cannot effectively deal with a state as poor, dysfunctional, and marginalized as North Korea, who will be prepared to rely on it?" Therefore, the InterAction Council must reiterate its 2013 demand that North Korea "...fully comply with its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, ...rejoin the NPT as a nuclear weapons-free state, and fully cooperate with the IAEA."

Constructive cooperation between Russia, the United States, China, Japan and South Korea is needed to resolve the conflict with North Korea. The role of China, in particular, cannot be underestimated, given that it is North Korea's primary trade partner, accounting for 90 per cent of its foreign trade.

## **Recommendations:**

1. North Korea must fully comply with its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, to rejoin the NPT as a nuclear weapons-free state, and fully cooperate with the IAEA.
2. China should be encouraged to play a leadership role in the resolution of the existing conflict with North Korea.

## **Russia**

A failure to engage in dialogue between the West and Russia has exacerbated a number of global conflicts and has stalled resolution of important international concerns; nuclear non-proliferation among them. It is crucial that we avoid a new Cold War and essential to this goal is the establishment of a new dialogue and partnership between the West and Russia. The first step towards reinvigorating this dialogue is the reinstating of the NATO-Russia Council as a positive platform for these discussions. Without a rapprochement between both sides, progress towards addressing the world's pressing geopolitical issues, including the proliferation of nuclear weapons will not be possible.

## **Recommendations:**

1. NATO-Russia Council meetings should recommence immediately to foster positive dialogue about nuclear non-proliferation and other issues of geopolitical importance;
2. The United States and Russia should work together to explore the possibilities of further reduction of their nuclear arsenals.

## **Iran**

Russia seeks to ensure its own security by having influence in the conflicts in the Middle East. However, it also seeks to project its influence by positioning itself as a great power, an indispensable player with a leading role in the management of regional affairs, according to one of the experts in attendance. He went on to argue that Russia is an “indispensable player,” given its veto and its close ties to Iran.

The factors that contributed to the successful negotiation of the JCPOA with Iran were discussed amongst the experts. It was suggested that the defining feature that led to the successful negotiation of the JCPOA was that there was adverse consequences for all parties if the negotiations failed, so that all parties felt that they could not walk away from the negotiations.

The JCPOA also helps to shed light on the role of sanctions in overcoming conflict. It was argued by one expert that for sanctions to be successful they must: (1) be multilateral and involve a broad cross-section of members of the international community; (2) be both broad and deep. Others argued that sanctions are counterproductive towards the resolution of disputes, because they create an atmosphere of mistrust that prevents the essential dialogue from taking place.

While there are lessons that can be learned from the successful negotiation of the JCPOA for other conflicts, there are a number of important domestic factors in Iran that contributed to the success of the agreement that must not be overlooked. These factors include the state of the Iranian economy and the role of moderates. While the sanctions did promote import substitution that created a new middle class, there were also internal political tensions that put pressure on the regime to reach a deal in order to have the sanctions lifted. These domestic factors contributed to reaching a deal, but may not be ready or present in other states, such as North Korea. In particular, the role of the international community in providing support to moderates must be done in a manner that does not undermine the positive factors pushing for change internally.

Will Iran move towards a normalization of relations with the rest of the world? Will there be a conservative push back to recent events? Or will the emerging well-educated and young population of Iran push it further into international dialogue?

Much, one participant offered, will depend on whether the Iranian economy is able to maintain sustained growth now that the sanctions have been lifted. For this economic growth to take place, economic reform needs to complement the sanctions being lifted. At the same time, the provisions of the JCPOA – including financial and technical resources – need to be effectively implemented if Iran is to respect its provisions and the sanctions remain removed. Economic growth will be made more difficult by the falling price of oil, which Iran seeks to sell on world markets, where the price of oil is predicted by one investment bank, Morgan Stanley, to fall to as low as \$20 per barrel.

As mentioned earlier, international organizations tasked with verifying this deal need to be adequately supported. Verification is essential because, as one expert offered, “the know-how and the means to building nuclear weapons eventually accrue to any state with a civilian nuclear program and a reasonably advanced scientific/technology community.” Consequently, the purpose of the JCPOA and the role of the IAEA is to prevent “know how” from being turned into actual weapons. However, verification alone will not be enough. As one participant offered, a starting point to understanding Iran’s stance in the negotiations is to reflect on its profound sense of vulnerability. Encouraging major powers to begin serious discussions about security guarantees in the Middle East will help to alleviate the fears of those who feel insecure and identify opportunities for collaboration on this issue. In particular those states not overly supportive of the JCPOA, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, must be brought into the discussion.

Iran’s relationship with its neighbours is often tense and complicated. Iran’s neighbours, according to one expert, view it as a competitor and as “an ambitious regional actor” whose rise will only come with their fall. This sentiment is compounded by the fact that Iran’s neighbours, such as Saudi Arabia, have also had ambitions to become regional powers. Saudi Arabia’s relationship with Iran has become even more strained recently due to the execution of a leading Shia religious figure. Sunni Saudi Arabia was chastised by Shia Iran and Saudi Arabia’s embassy in Iran was sacked. This led several Sunni-majority countries, such as Bahrain and United Arab Emirates, to cut-off diplomatic ties with Iran.

While dialogue in and about the Middle East has been at times difficult, progress towards resolving the conflicts that may appear intractable, will never be made without it. A renewed dialogue with Iran on nuclear proliferation was one of the major positive events of 2015.

Building on this momentum is crucial: first, the JCPOA must be implemented; and second, Iran should be encouraged to use its influence to restore peace and stability to Syria, in particular, and the Middle East in general.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Ongoing discussions for the continuation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action past the current expiration date be pursued in order to create incentives for renewal prior to the expiry of the current agreement; and
2. Close attention should be paid towards Iran's relationship with its neighbours and positive dialogue should be facilitated.

### **Isis**

The world is certainly preoccupied with the threat of Isis. However, joint and sustained action to address the threat has not occurred. Why? Some of the participants offered that this was because Isis, while being a common threat to many, is not the number one threat to any. The terror of Isis has pushed actors, who otherwise may not have seen each other as having a common interest, into dialogue.

In the face of the atrocities being perpetrated by Isis, the dignity of human life requires actions. A successful response to Isis requires a comprehensive, multilateral approach anchored in international law. The threat of Isis certainly requires a military response, but in addition to force, the international community must employ other tools to deal with Isis activities. The widespread mass killings, abductions, slavery and sexual violence committed by Isis amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Council of Europe and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein have stated that Isis may have committed genocide against ethnic and religious minorities. Under international law, states are required to prevent these crimes and hold those responsible to account. Peace and justice must be sought in parallel. It was proposed that an unconditional, time-limited, and comprehensive ceasefire to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria be immediately negotiated and implemented.

Illegal and unregulated arms trade feed violence. It has been reported that the massive arsenal of arms in the hands of Isis today, is the result of poorly regulated arms trade and lax control over the Iraqi military stockpile. The Council has previously taken note of the importance of regulating arms trade and continues to call for widespread ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). A number of organisations have called for a comprehensive arms embargo on Syria. The InterAction Council has persistently called for the end of the unrestricted

proliferation and availability of small arms, which exacerbates such conflict. So too does the conflict in Syria necessitate a reconfirmation that chemical warfare in any form must cease immediately.

The impact of Isis does not end within the borders of its self-claimed caliphate. Millions of refugees have fled the Syrian war and indiscriminate violence by Isis in Iraq. While the majority of these refugees reside in over-crowded settlements in Syria's neighbouring countries, European countries are closing their borders from those trying to receive protection there. The UN has informed states that the Syria Regional Refugee Response, which is a coalition of aid organizations, has only met 56 per cent of its required funding for 2016. Resettlement, such as the recent pledge by the Canadian government to resettle 25,000 refugees, is welcome as it allows vulnerable individuals such as children and families to receive protection without having to embark upon perilous journeys to reach safe countries.

Hundreds of young men and women have travelled to the region to join Isis. In order to combat radicalisation and recruitment of new Isis members, states must also address those social and economic factors, such as poverty, youth unemployment, and racism that are driving young men and women all over the world to join groups such as Isis. Countering terrorism is as important as ever, but the international community must be careful not to repeat its mistakes of the "war on terrorism." The Council's previous reports, and recommendations, on respecting human rights while countering terrorism are as topical today as they were then.

Most importantly, in the face of human suffering in Syria, it was proposed that an unconditional, time-limited, and comprehensive ceasefire to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria be immediately negotiated and implemented.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The United Nations Security Council is urged to refer the situations in Syria and Iraq to the International Criminal Court, in order to hold accountable those responsible international crimes and ensure justice, truth and reparations for victims;
2. Should the United Nations Security Council fail to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC, states are urged to apply universal jurisdiction to ensure justice for these crimes;
3. The United Nations Security Council should impose an arms embargo on the Syrian government and all armed groups operating in the country;
4. All states should ratify and implement the Arms Trade Treaty and take urgent steps to curb future arms proliferation in Iraq and Syria;
5. States should ensure the sufficient funding of the United Nations Refugee Agency and

- in particular the Syria Regional Refugee Response;
6. States should resettle and give international protection to those fleeing violence by Isis;
  7. In countering terrorism, States must adhere to international law and human rights obligations;
  8. Radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations should be combatted through comprehensive programs that include such elements as education and employment;
  9. An unconditional, time-limited, and comprehensive ceasefire to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria be immediately negotiated and implemented;
  10. A comprehensive program to deal with the humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Syria and exacerbated by Isis instructed by international legal norms should be urgently assembled; and
  11. Reiterate the call that chemical weapons never be used in times of war or peace.

# LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

## InterAction Council Members

1. The Rt. Hon. Jean **Chrétien** (former Prime Minister), Canada

## Secretary-General

2. Dr. Thomas S. **Axworthy**, Distinguished Senior Fellow, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto

## Special Guests

3. Dr. Adele **Buckley**, Past Chair, Canadian Pugwash; Member, Pugwash Council
4. Prof. Tony **Burman**, Distinguished Visiting Professor of Journalism, Ryerson University; Former Head CBC News and Al Jazeera English in Qatar (Canada)
5. Prof. Kathleen **Davis**, Adjunct Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School; Doctoral Candidate, University of Toronto
6. Dr. Walter **Dorn**, Professor of Defence Studies, Royal Military College of Canada; past Chair, Canadian Pugwash
7. Dr. John **English**, Director, Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History, Trinity College/Munk School, University of Toronto
8. Prof. Thomas **Juneau**, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa
9. Mr. Patrick **Martin**, Senior Correspondent, specializing in the Middle East, *The Globe and Mail*
10. The Hon. R. Roy **McMurtry**, former High Commissioner to the United Kingdom; former Chief Justice of Ontario; former Attorney General of Ontario
11. Dr. John **Polanyi**, Faculty Member and Nobel Laureate, Department of Chemistry, University of Toronto; Founding Chairman, Canadian Pugwash Group
12. Mr. Oleg V. **Pozdnyakov**, Senior Counsellor, Russian Embassy
13. Prof. Ernie **Regehr**, Senior Fellow in Arctic Security, The Simons Foundation; Research Fellow, Centre for Peace Advancement, Conrad Grebel University College
14. The Hon. Hugh **Segal**, Master of Massey College; Chair, NATO Association of Canada; Co-Chair, Democracy 10 negotiations in Europe, 2015, 2016 Committee
15. Dr. Erika **Simpson**, Associate Professor of International Relations, Western University
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18. Mr. Murray **Thomson**, Co-Founder, Project Ploughshares; Coordinator, Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention
19. The Very Rev. the Hon. Dr. Lois M. **Wilson**, Distinguished Minister-in-Residence, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto