

**PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT
ZONA LIBRE
WORLD FUTURE COUNCIL
ABOLITION 2000 NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION WORKING GROUP
Russia-USA Strategic Stability Dialogue
NO FIRST USE**

July 19, 2021

Mr Joseph Biden
President of the United States of America

Mr Vladimir Putin
President of the Russian Federation

Delegates to Strategic Stability Dialogue

Dear President Biden and President Putin,
Dear Delegates to the Strategic Stability Dialogue

We commend you for adopting the [U.S.-Russia Presidential Joint Statement on Strategic Stability](#), in which you affirmed that '*a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought*', and by which you established an *integrated bilateral Strategic Stability Dialogue* to lay the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures

We welcome the commencement of the **Integrated Bilateral Strategic Stability Dialogue**, the first meeting of which we understand may take place this week.

We recall and draw your attention to the [Open Letter](#) sent to you prior to the June 16 Summit [endorsed by over 1200 highly distinguished persons](#) including legislators, religious leaders, civil society leaders and former government leaders (prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs and defence, diplomats and senior military personnel). The Open Letter expresses the same understanding as in your Joint Statement, that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and it calls for the implementation of this understanding through the adoption and implementation of nuclear-risk-reduction measures, the most important of these being the adoption of **No-First-Use policies**.

In strict logic, if no one 'fires first' with a nuclear weapon, as **No-First-Use** implies, then the war that 'cannot be won and must never be fought' cannot take place. Whatever caveats might be added to that (accidental launch, miscalculation, malware,

etc), it is clear that a commitment to **No-First-Use**, does at least make escalation to nuclear war much much less likely.

To date, India and China have adopted unilateral **No-First-Use** policies. Russia and China have adopted a mutual **No-First-Use** agreement. It is notable that when Indian and Chinese troops fought over parts of Tibet/Ladakh, escalation to nuclear war was not threatened or implied by either side. In contrast, when Russian and US/NATO forces face each other across Baltic or Ukrainian or Black Sea borders, escalation to a nuclear crisis or even nuclear war is not ruled out and remains a frightening possibility.

Regardless of whether or not the various conflicts between USA and Russia can be suitably managed or resolved in the short to medium term, the risks of nuclear confrontation need to be reduced, strategic stability restored and progress on arms control and disarmament achieved. This is the fundamental purpose of your Strategic Dialogue, which is of benefit not only to the Russian Federation and the USA, but to the entire world.

No-First-Use, and the closely related 'sole purpose' policy option, (that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons use is to prevent other nuclear weapons use), are not of course, the only measures that can be taken to lower the risk of nuclear war, whether started by conflict escalation or accident. A range of measures can be taken that include de-alerting, data-sharing, and avoidance of provocative exercises near each other's borders with nuclear-capable forces. All of these measures will be facilitated by a posture of **No-First-Use**.

A [full menu of nuclear risk reduction measures](#) may be found on the website of the Abolition 2000 nuclear risk reduction working group:

Of particular relevance is a [Letter to President Biden](#) from Dec 2020, canvassing risk reduction measures including **No-First-Use** (and urging strategic dialogue), that could be profitably discussed in a strategic stability dialogue.

However, out of all these worthy measures, **No-First-Use** is, hopefully, something that the Russian Federation and the United States of America can find or create the political space and the will upon which to agree.

The world has been a little too close to the brink recently. Anything that a Strategic Stability Dialogue can do to take us back from that brink is most welcome and we therefore wish the very best for this very important process.

Signed:

(Affiliations for identification purposes only)

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