

# Religions for Peace

## *Dismay and Concern Regarding the Expiration of the New START Treaty*

### *Statement from the Secretary General*

It is with sadness and grave concern that we bear witness today to the expiration of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START). The implications for international peace and security are profound, as the treaty's expiration paves the way for heightened strategic instability and the rise of renewed nuclear competition.

This development cuts particularly close to the heart of *Religions for Peace*. The origins of *Religions for Peace* are deeply rooted in the post-World War II peace movement, specifically as a moral response to the existential threat posed by the nuclear arms race during the Cold War.

Since its founding in 1970, *Religions for Peace* has stood as a unified voice for the conscience of humanity. Our movement was born from the conviction by religious leaders—many from Japan, who bore witness to the atomic shadow—that the existence of nuclear weapons poses an enduring and unacceptable threat to the sacredness of life. We have spent over five decades advocating for restraint, risk reduction, and the dismantlement of these instruments of annihilation.

And so, today marks a somber milestone in global security. With the formal expiration of New START, the world enters a period of heightened uncertainty. For the first time in over half a century, the two largest nuclear-armed powers—the United States and the Russian Federation—are operating without legally binding, verifiable limits on their nuclear arsenals.

The expiration of New START is not merely a diplomatic lapse; it reflects a failure of collective political will to sustain dialogue. As the mechanisms for inspection and transparency vanish, the risk of miscalculation, accidental escalation, and a renewed arms race grows. In an era of heightened global tension, the absence of a negotiated successor to New START leaves the world in a state of profound vulnerability.

While we lament the loss of bilateral frameworks, we recognize that the path forward must be more ambitious. At a time when dialogue between major powers has eroded, the maintenance and restoration of channels of communication are essential to preventing misunderstanding and crisis escalation. The lack of dialogue between the major powers makes the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) an increasingly important legal and moral framework. The TPNW provides critical global architecture to delegitimize nuclear weapons entirely.

To the global community, we reiterate: true security is not found in the balance of terror, but in mutual trust, dialogue, and the protection of our shared humanity. *Religions for Peace*, as the world's largest multi-religious organization, has witnessed the transformative power of interfaith solidarity. Time and again, we have seen how love, compassion, and collective action can heal even the deepest fractures, forging a path toward Shared Sacred Flourishing.

For this reason, we call upon the leadership of the United States and the Russian Federation to resume a “diplomacy of restraint.” At minimum, this must include restoration and preservation of robust lines of communication, including crisis-management and military-to-military channels, to reduce the risk of miscalculation and unintended escalation. We urge them to honor the spirit of previous agreements even in the absence of a formal treaty and to return to the negotiating table without delay. We also call upon

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all states to strengthen engagement with international frameworks, including the TPNW, that advance nuclear risk reduction and disarmament.

In this critical hour—when our global family faces a greater spectre of the almost unimaginably horrific consequences of nuclear war—we are summoned to rise above division and walk together in solidarity. Let our sacred commitments serve as a beacon of reconciliation. May our collective efforts become a transformative force for lasting unity, prosperity, and peace.

**In faith and solidarity,**

*Dr. Francis Kuria*

Secretary General