

**International Council on the Middle East Peace Process**  
**Madrid**  
**(University of Pittsburgh)**  
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LETTER OF INVITATION BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Russian Federation is strongly committed to the Middle East Peace Process as a Quartet member for the Road Map to Peace. The Soviet Union was the first country to recognize Israel in 1948 while still being a strong supporter of the Arab world throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The country has successfully maintained an impartial and dual track method for Middle Eastern cooperation that has seen the country prolong strong ties with both Israel and the Arab world. In April 2005, while in a meeting with Israel, Putin formulated his desire to be a continued strong partner with the Middle East. He told his Israeli diplomatic guests at Moscow, “We have all the conditions for success, and most important, there is the will and desire on both sides to strengthen our friendship, trust and cooperation and to build a constructive partnership together.” Later that same month, he reinforced this notion by telling the Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahram* that Russia “is not indifferent to the fate of these people.” Russia has the same sentimentality with its Palestinian and Arab partners. Also in April 2005, while at the grave of Yasir Arafat, Putin promised to “provide the Palestinian leadership with technical help, supplies of equipment and training.” The actions of the Russian Federation strongly indicates that an equal, impartial approach to cooperation in the Middle East is the only way both sides will feel they have equal footing in the international community.

This is a necessary prerequisite for etching an historic peace that is now, more than ever, foreseeable. The Russian Federation believes the new leadership in the region such as Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, Bashar al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic, Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of the Lebanese Republic, and the recent removal of Israeli troops and settlers in the Gaza strip all make this summit not just a critical one but one where substantive breakthroughs are a possibility. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's support for previous disengagement from Gaza and promise of continued movement towards a Palestinian state further reinforces the notion that the current timing makes significant advancements towards peace foreseeable.

**I. Methods for cooperation in the Middle East**

The Russian Federation has been a strong supporter of economic, technological, and environmental cooperation in the Middle East. The largest Russophone Diaspora lies in Israel. Iran’s relationship with Russia has been a reliable and peaceful one. The Arab world’s historic relations with Russia have also been very productive and lasting. This puts the Russian Federation in an excellent strategic position to help facilitate cooperation between all sides in the Middle East in any method they see fit. In this sense, the Russian Federation is a key member of the Quartet with substantive working relations with all three parties in the Middle East, and the technical and economic expertise to help promote sustainable, productive opportunities for cooperation in the region.

The Russian Federation has shown its desire to help promote Middle East cooperation. Along with its fellow American Quartet member, the Russian Federation chaired the Multilateral Water Resources Working Group to help the Middle East more effectively share scarce water resources, such as those in the Jordan River basin. On April 16, 2006 in Shanghai at a joint news conference with President Putin and President Ahmadinejad, the Russian Federation continued to demonstrate its long record of cooperation with many countries in the Middle East in improving processing techniques for indigenous regional natural resource industries such as natural gas and petroleum. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are just a few of the Middle Eastern countries Russia has cooperated with and successfully aided in these sectors.

## **II. Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Weaponization and Proliferation in the Middle East**

The Russian Federation has worked very hard with the international community to put an end to its long history of posturing and usage of weapons of mass destruction. Through its key role in the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention establishing the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Russian Federation has worked to establish internationally accepted standards and ethics for biological and chemical research, proper usage of commercial chemicals, and the positive and safe promotion of nuclear energy. Moreover, it has shown Russia's commitment to nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), be it nuclear, biological, or chemical.

### **A. Nuclear Proliferation and Weaponization**

Much of the aggression in the region in this arena of weaponization is falsely reported in Iran. It has been the stance of Iran that they do not have nuclear weapons, and the Russian Federation has ensured that has been the case as all Russian technologies provided to Iran have been for the promotion of nuclear energy.

The IAEA standards are clear; for nonproliferation purposes the highest limit for civilian usage is 20%. Beyond that, uranium enrichment is clearly for weaponization. If both countries truly do not have such nuclear capabilities, there is no reason they cannot be fully candid regarding their nuclear programs and show they are meeting civilian usage standards. As always, this is done at the most confidential level and is not disseminated as that would compromise each country's defense capabilities. However, if beyond safe levels, it will be reported and it will be censured.

On many occasions, the IAEA has shown Iran has followed that standard. The only borderline case there has been was one contaminated highly-enriched uranium deposit found in Natanz, which was proven to be from Pakistan and not Iran. The Russian Federation believes that all members of the international community are allowed to have tools to help promote the renewable energy that can be derived from low-enriched uranium. Geopolitics should not stand in the way of such a positive and beneficial energy source. Because Russia is so confident that Iran is using its nuclear program for purely peaceful purposes, Russia launched a satellite on April 26 that allows Israel to investigate Iran's nuclear program. The Russian Federation continues to ensure that it and its Middle East neighbors establish nuclear programs

solely for positive, civilian, and renewable energy usage.

## **B. Chemical and Biological Proliferation and Weaponization**

Of the eight countries who refuse to participate in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), four of them are in the Arab world; the Republic of Iraq, the Lebanese Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the Syrian Arab Republic. Aggravating the problem even further is Israel's maintenance as just a signatory to the Convention, as Israel has yet to ratify the treaties through its national processes. Egypt, Iran, Israel and Syria are suspected of retaining biological and chemical weapons programs. Furthermore, former leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Hafiz al-Assad, and Saddam Hussein have reportedly used chemical or biological warfare on their own people or in military conflict.

It is the strong stance of the Russian Federation that proliferation of this nature is avoidable and nonproliferation and disarmament of such weaponry is an unquestionable condition for peace. The Russian Federation continues to look inwardly at its own illegal weapon stockpile problems. The Russian Federation strongly believes that in order to be an effective example to the Middle East, it must adequately demonstrate that global standards such as the CWC doesn't just apply to certain countries but that it applies to all countries. On March 1, 2006, the Russian Federation destroyed more of its own chemical weapon stockpiles at Kambarka in the Udmurt Republic. The Russian Federation hopes that the Middle East will follow its lead and destroy its own chemical weapon stockpiles.

## **III. The new direction for Israel and Palestine and the Need for a Comprehensive Plan on Terrorism**

As with the rest of the Quartet, the Russian Federation hopes the new leadership in the Palestinian Authority and the recent removal of Israeli settlers and troops in the Gaza strip will help reverse both parties' history of ignoring the Quartet's initiatives for peace in the region.

With the election of one of the main Palestinian negotiators of the 1993 Oslo Accords, Mahmoud Abbas (abu Mazen), as the President of the Palestinian Authority, the Russian Federation feels a new era and direction for the Middle East Peace Process can begin. However, the Russian Federation feels that in order for true peace to occur, five contentious issues must be tackled: Jerusalem, the Palestinian Right of Return, the future of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the borders of the state of Palestine, and the security wall. The Russian Federation believes that the best method to address these issues is the Road Map for Peace it as well as the other members of the Quartet have supported. However, the Russian Federation will work as an effective mediator in any way both sides see fit to pursue serious, permanent, and substantive negotiations that lead to a complete and genuine peace document.

The Russian Federation is deeply concerned with the growing threat of terrorism in the Middle East. It continues to go unresolved, and, as a result, it continues to hinder peace in the region and continues to directly harm Russian citizenry as the al-Qaeada Network continues to put people in Chechnya and other neighboring Russian provinces in grave danger. The Russian Federation is adamant that peace can not be permanent and genuine if this issue is not resolved immediately.

On that same note, the Russian Federation does not believe rightly and fairly elected groups such as Hamas are terrorist groups. According to a working UN definition of terrorism established in 2004, terrorism is “intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act.”<sup>1</sup> In its current form, the Russian Federation believes Hamas is no longer a non-state actor and thus does not meet this definition. The Russian Federation will continue to work with both sides and mediate a suitable and genuine compromise between both Israel and the current Palestinian Authority, so this issue can be resolved expediently as it is a critical one in the fight against terrorism.

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The Russian Federation is in a unique position to host this council as an impartial mediator with because it has substantive, positive, and successful ties with the Middle East. Furthermore, the Russian Federation has been called into the region frequently since the founding of Israel in 1948. These many instances indicate that the Russian Federation has shown its commitment in attaining international solidarity and commitment towards a successful conclusion to the Middle East peace process. We hope each party comes to the council with an open mind and a willingness to work towards truly substantive and lasting agreements. The recent events in the region have brought an historic opportunity to use this fortuitous timing as a platform for genuine peace in the region, and the Russian Federation is willing to undertake such a challenge. The Russian Federation looks forward to fruitful discussion at the council and hopes this council will be the beginnings of a new peaceful era in the Middle East. It is the genuine hope of the Russian Federation that the world will become one that is peaceful and diplomatic in all conflict resolution.

Sincerely,

Vladimir Putin  
President

Sergey Lavrov  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Alexander Kalugin  
Russia's special envoy to the Middle East

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/unifeed/script.asp?scriptId=73>