December 9, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Richard Durbin
The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid, Durbin and Schumer:

Failure to act on the New START treaty this year would undermine the country’s national security interests, as both our military leadership and numerous former Republican officials have noted.

Failure to bring New START to the floor will also squander the significant momentum that has built up in support of the treaty. There is now widespread bipartisan support for New START in the Senate, making it imperative that a floor vote happen before the Senate goes out of session.

Any issue that is left uncompleted during the next month will drag long into 2011; a new Senate takes months to get organized. The new make up of the Senate also promises to complicate ratification, potentially requiring new, more costly negotiations.

If New START is permitted to lag into next year, the U.S. will continue to lack an essential window into the makeup of Russia’s nuclear arsenal that it hasn’t had since START I expired last December. As Gen. Kevin Chilton, the commander of STRATCOM, stated June 16: “If we don’t get the treaty, [the Russians] are not constrained in their development of force structure and…we have no insight into what they’re doing. So it’s the worst of both possible worlds.” Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin also warned that failure to ratify the treaty now could harm US-Russian relations. Indeed, failure to ratify New START now could undercut US efforts to contain Iran.

The treaty is supported unanimously by the nation’s military and intelligence leadership and most prominent former senior national security officials from Republican as well as Democratic administrations. They support it because it will make the U.S. safer.

We urge you to take up and approve New START now, if need be by extending the Senate in session beyond December 17.

Sincerely,

Frances Beinecke, President
Natural Resources Defense Council

Jay Coghlan, Executive Director
Nuclear Watch New Mexico
Shan Cretin, General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

Charles D. Ferguson
President, Federation of American Scientists

Ambassador James Goodby
Hoover Institution

Susan Gordon, Director
Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

Ambassador Thomas Graham Jr, Chairman
Bipartisan Security Group

Jonathan Granoff, President
Global Security Institute

Ambassador Robert Grey
Former US Representative to the Conference on Disarmament

Ken Gude, Director of National Security
Center for American Progress

Howard W. Hallman, Chair
Methodists United for Peace with Justice

Katie Heald, Coordinator
Campaign for a Nuclear Weapons Free World

Heather Hurlburt, Executive Director
National Security Network

Paul Ingram, Executive Director
British American Security Information Council

Kevin Kamps, Project Director
Beyond Nuclear

Marylia Kelley, Executive Director
Tri-Valley CAREs, Livermore

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director,
Arms Control Association
United Methodist General Board of Church and Society