

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 14, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As Russia brazenly violates countless international rules and norms with its unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, we write to express our concern over the radiological risks surrounding Ukraine's nuclear power plants. In the face of these catastrophic risks, the technical expertise of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should be made available to monitor and advise on the rapidly changing situation on the ground. We urge you to find ways to encourage IAEA's involvement in monitoring this situation.

Moscow's seizure of Ukraine's nuclear facilities is unprecedented. It is the first time that a civilian nuclear reactor has ever come under direct military assault. Coupled with its decision to put its nuclear forces on high alert, Russia is demonstrating a reckless disregard for human life and for preventing a nuclear disaster.

Civilian nuclear power facilities came under threat immediately after the first shots of the invasion. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Ukraine's largest nuclear power plant, Zaporizhzhia, was attacked by Russian forces, who fired heavy weapons at the reactor and administrative buildings, causing damage to critical areas that house dangerous nuclear fuel. This attack also started a fire at a facility adjacent to the nuclear reactors. More recently, the decommissioned Chernobyl nuclear power station, which Russia seized on the second day of the conflict, has been cut off from power, jeopardizing the cooling systems that are critical for preventing the release of radiation into the atmosphere.

The working conditions of Ukrainian technicians and nuclear engineers at these stations are also a serious concern. The Russian military commander that attacked the Zaporizhzhia plant is now supervising site activities there, despite not being versed in nuclear power issues. The Ukrainian Energy Minister German Galushchenko has alleged that Russia is forcing management personnel at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant to make propaganda recordings. At the Chernobyl station, Russia has held more than 200 technical personnel and guards for over two weeks. These operators are, according to Ukraine's Energy Minister, "physically and psychological exhausted," while handling potentially toxic material.

The IAEA says it has been asked by Ukraine's regulator to help create a plan to provide "an effective rotation system" for the approximately 200 staff who remain at Chernobyl. It is imperative that neutral inspectors be allowed to observe and evaluate all Ukrainian nuclear

facilities, report to the international community, and ensure that a radiological catastrophe does not occur.

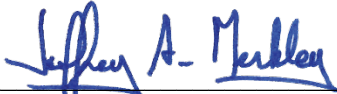
The Director General of the IAEA, Rafael Mariano Grossi, supports IAEA oversight and has already proposed a trilateral meeting between Russia, Ukraine and the IAEA at Chernobyl. Russia has [responded](#) that it supports Grossi's idea, but that it does not support the site location of Chernobyl, a worrying sign about Russia's willingness to negotiate in good faith. On March 10, Grossi travelled to Anatolia, Turkey and separately met with the foreign ministers of Ukraine and Russia. It is critical that the United States and international community support the IAEA's efforts to make a trilateral meeting happen.

We recognize that, under current conditions, none of this is possible without Russia's consent. Moreover, we recognize that Russia has not negotiated in good faith in other diplomatic efforts, especially as it has flouted cease-fire agreements allowing civilians to flee the violence. While we must be clear-eyed about the limits and pitfalls of engagement, we must also do everything possible to ensure that a nuclear disaster in Ukraine does not take place due to malice, mistake, or misunderstanding.

At a moment like this, when all other channels of communication are extremely limited, there is a dire need for proper oversight and verification at all of Ukraine's civilian nuclear facilities.

While we have yet to stop the tragic violence, we can mitigate some of the most frightening and long-term collateral damage that could occur in this conflict. We call on you, as President, to take any available action to encourage the IAEA's involvement in monitoring the situation in Ukraine, identifying any necessary action that may be advisable, and recommending all necessary cautionary action required for the utmost safety.

Sincerely,



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator  
Co-Chair, NWAC Working Group



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator  
Co-Chair, NWAC Working Group



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress  
Co-Chair, NWAC Working Group



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John Garamendi  
Member of Congress  
Co-Chair, NWAC Working Group

CC Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken