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Joint statement by the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action: 14 January 2020

We, the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, share fundamental common security interests, along with our European partners. One of them is upholding the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and ensuring that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) plays a key role in this respect, as our Leaders have just unambiguously reaffirmed. The JCPOA is a key achievement of multilateral diplomacy and the global non-proliferation architecture. We negotiated the JCPOA with the conviction that it would decisively contribute to building confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, as well as to international peace and security.

Together, we have stated unequivocally our regret and concern at the decision by the United States to withdraw from the JCPOA and to re-impose sanctions on Iran. Since May 2018, we have worked together to preserve the agreement. The E3 have fully upheld our JCPOA commitments, including sanctions-lifting as foreseen under the terms of the agreement. In addition to the lifting of all sanctions, required by our commitments under the agreement, we have worked tirelessly to support legitimate trade with Iran, including through the INSTEX special purpose vehicle.

Following Iran's announcement in May 2019 that it would cease meeting some of its commitments under the JCPOA, we have sought to persuade Iran to change course. The E3 have worked hard to address Iran's concerns and bring it back into compliance with its commitments under the nuclear agreement. We have also undertaken and supported diplomatic efforts, such as France's initiative, to deescalate tensions and to bring Iran and the US to the negotiating table for a comprehensive negotiated solution. The E3 remain fully committed to this diplomatic effort and intend to resume it as soon as conditions allow.

However, in the meantime Iran has continued to break key restrictions set out in the JCPOA. Iran's actions are inconsistent with the provisions of the nuclear agreement and have increasingly severe and non-reversible proliferation implications.

We do not accept the argument that Iran is entitled to reduce compliance with the JCPOA. Contrary to its statements, Iran has never triggered the JCPOA Dispute Resolution Mechanism and has no legal grounds to cease implementing the provisions of the agreement.

We publicly stated our concerns, along with the High Representative of the European Union, on 11 November. At the Joint Commission on 6 December, we made clear to Iran that unless it reversed course, we would have no choice but to take action within the framework of the JCPOA, including through the Dispute Resolution Mechanism.

Instead of reversing course, Iran has chosen to further reduce compliance with the JCPOA and announced on 5 January that "the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the fifth step in reducing its commitments, discards the last key component of its limitations in the JCPOA, which is the 'limit on the number of centrifuges'", and that "the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear program no longer faces any operational restrictions", including on enrichment and enrichment-related matters.

We have therefore been left with no choice, given Iran's actions, but to register today our concerns that Iran is not meeting its commitments under the JCPOA and to refer this matter to the Joint Commission under the Dispute Resolution Mechanism, as set out in paragraph 36 of the JCPOA.

We do this in good faith with the overarching objective of preserving the JCPOA and in the sincere hope of finding a way forward to resolve the impasse through constructive diplomatic dialogue, while preserving the agreement and remaining within its framework. In doing so, our three countries are not joining a campaign to implement maximum pressure against Iran. Our hope is to bring Iran back into full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom once again express our commitment to the JCPOA and our determination to work with all participants to preserve it. We remain convinced that this landmark multilateral international agreement and its non-proliferation benefits enhance our shared security interests and strengthen the rules-based international order.

We are grateful to the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China, with whom we remain in close consultation, for joining us in our common endeavor to preserve the JCPOA. We also thank the High Representative of the European Union for his ongoing good offices in this regard. Given recent events, it is all the more important that we do not add a nuclear proliferation crisis to the current escalation threatening the whole region.