Resolution on the future of the INF Treaty and the impact on the European Union

2019/2574(RSP) - 14/02/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the future of the INF Treaty and the impact on the European Union.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, and Greens/EFA groups.

Parliament stated that the INF Treaty, signed in 1987 by the United States and the Soviet Union, is a cornerstone for maintaining world peace and regional security, and had contributed to containing strategic competition between the US and the Soviet Union, and subsequently the Russian Federation, and to building and reinforcing stability in the Cold War era. It added that the withdrawal announcements are calling into question the likelihood of the non-extension of other major arms control treaties, such as the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms ('New START'), which would seriously damage the international arms control regime, which has provided decades of stability regarding nuclear weapons, leaving the world with no legally binding, verifiable limits on nuclear arsenals.

Members expressed deep concern at the breaches of the Treaty, and the subsequent announcements by the US and then Russia regarding the suspension of their obligations under it and their withdrawal from it within a period of six months. Members underlined that these developments might result in miscalculations and misperceptions leading to a deterioration of relations between the US and Russia, an escalation of tensions, heightened nuclear and military threats and risks, and a possible return of destabilising arms races, which would be detrimental to Europe's security and strategic stability.

Parliament condemned Russia for continuing to breach the terms of the Treaty, and called on the Russian Federation to return to full and verifiable compliance, in order to address the concerns raised by the US and by NATO, in response to Russia's continuing breach of the terms of the Treaty. It recalled that the US and NATO have repeatedly questioned Russia about its missile development activities, in particular as regards the 9M729 missile system, which they consider to be in breach of the INF Treaty.

Members called on both Russia and the US to resolve the respective compliance allegations, to engage in a constructive dialogue under the auspices of the UN Security Council, the Special Verification Commission or other appropriate forums, with the aim of reducing tensions, taking into account both parties' interests and concerns and pursuing negotiations in good faith to safeguard the INF Treaty before the effective withdrawal in August 2019. The Vice President of the Commission/High Representative was asked, for her part, to use the six-month window to use all political and diplomatic means at her disposal to engage in dialogue with the INF States Parties in order to restore cross-border trust, while offering the EU's mediation expertise to prevent the withdrawal of both the US and Russia. Parliament asked the VP /HR to ensure that the EU acts as a proactive and credible security provider, including for its neighbourhood, and that it plays a constructive role in developing the global rules-based non-proliferation efforts and arms control and disarmament architecture.

Members emphasised that the uncertain future of the INF Treaty should not put other arms control agreements in jeopardy; notably urges the US and Russia to extend the New START agreement, which limits the number of deployed strategic warheads on either side to 1 550, before it expires in 2021.

Parliament went on to state that European security should remain indivisible, and it called on all EU Member States that are also NATO members to act accordingly. Members calls on the VP/HR to:

- develop a common threat assessment analysing the implications for the EU's security should the protection that the INF Treaty provides to the Union and its citizens cease to apply and report back to Parliament, and to develop thereafter a credible and ambitious nuclear disarmament strategy based on effective multilateralism;

- bring forward proposals to mobilise EU funds and strengthen the Union's knowledge base and expertise regarding non-proliferation, arms control and human capacities to analyse threats emanating from nuclear weapons;

- present prudent plans for how to prevent unintended or accidental use of nuclear weapons.