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American Association for the Advancement of Science

Arms Control Association

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Cato Institute

Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

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Center for Science and Global Security, Princeton University

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Council for a Livable World

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Natural Resources Defense Council

Nuclear Threat Initiative

Partnership for Global Security

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Physicians for Social Responsibility

Project on Government Oversight

Project on Managing the Atom, Harvard University

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Security Studies Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The Stanley Foundation

Union of Concerned Scientists

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December 6, 2010

Urge Full Funding for Crucial Nonproliferation Programs

Dear Colleague,

We urge you to support funding for threat reduction and nonproliferation programs at FY 2011 requested levels in the next continuing resolution or omnibus appropriations bill that Congress must pass to fund the government. This funding is a necessary step to achieve the cooperative international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear, chemical and biological materials in the foreseeable future.

Most experts agree that the threat of nuclear terrorism is the greatest peril facing our country today. Twenty countries are believed to possess bomb-grade nuclear material that is not secure. Nuclear security will require a global effort, but U.S. leadership is critical.

In April 2010, the President convened an unprecedented Nuclear Security Summit in Washington D.C. during which the leaders of 47 nations pledged their support for the four-year goal and made promises to take concrete measures toward achieving it. Numerous bipartisan reports have outlined the urgency of the danger and warned that more needs to be done to ensure that terrorists never obtain a nuclear weapon or materials usable for a nuclear device.

In FY 2011, the Obama administration requested \$3.1 billion for international WMD security programs, a \$320 million increase over the FY 2010 budget. The FY 2011 request includes significant increases for key threat-reduction and nonproliferation programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Department of Defense, including the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, the International Material Protection and Cooperation Program, and the “Nunn-Lugar” Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.

Earlier this year, both relevant House and Senate subcommittees decided to fully fund these important programs despite the current economic climate and competing funding demands.

However, the first Continuing Resolution passed at the end of September to fund the government through December 3 funded most government programs at FY 2010 levels, including programs to secure and safeguard nuclear weapons and materials. This was a setback to efforts to prevent nuclear terrorism because the overall funding request and congressional appropriations for threat reduction in FY 2010 was actually less than the amount Congress appropriated in FY 2009.

There is a bipartisan consensus that limiting access to vulnerable nuclear weapons-usable materials will greatly reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism.

The global financial cost and terrible destruction of a nuclear terrorist attack would dwarf the costs of preventing such an attack.

We urge you to ensure that threat reduction and nonproliferation programs at NNSA and the Department of Defense are funded at the FY 2011 level for the remainder of the fiscal year. Our national security demands it.

Sincerely,

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