Give the world a real Olympic Opening - Open Syria to life-saving aid:

The Sochi Winter Olympics will deliver a dazzling spectacle, breath-taking athleticism and shimmering winter beauty. We will witness extreme feats of human bravery and see in the faces of the world’s best athletes the sheer tenacity and commitment that has gone into training for the games.

Only one thousand miles away, a very different spectacle unfolds. In Syria, snow and ice create life-threatening conditions for women and children already weakened by a severe lack of food and medicine. The courage and determination etched on their faces is caused by an even greater feat of human endurance; that of survival against the odds. Over 9 million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance, over 13 times the number of people that will be fortunate enough to attend or participate in the Sochi Games. 40 per cent of hospitals have been put out of action by the conflict. 2 million children have been forced out of school. If the Olympic Games showcases the best of humanity, Syria showcases the worst. The most expensive Games in history will take place so close to the worst humanitarian crisis of our times.

The Olympic Games are intended to uphold the goals of peaceful coexistence, fair play, and a worldwide truce called for the duration of the Games. The world is blighted by conflict but nowhere is the stark contrast with the spirit of the Games so apparent. Here too, Russian leadership can deliver an Olympic opening that will make an immediate and dramatic difference to millions of innocent people in desperate need.

As President Putin welcomes the world to Sochi, he has a moment in which to prove that the world’s most ambitious Olympics will be used as a moment to secure a political legacy of which the Russian people and the rest of the world can be truly proud. In a 6 February statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry called for a global Olympic truce to the world’s conflict, particularly in Syria. In the spirit of the Olympics, we urge President Putin to build on this welcome call and make his mark in history and deliver three things:

- **The truce:** Lead efforts to agree a UN Security Council humanitarian resolution that calls for Syria’s parties to the conflict to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and open Syria’s conflict lines and borders to ensure aid reaches all those in need, including through local ceasefires.

- **Fair play:** Demand in the Resolution that all parties to the conflict agree to abandon medieval and illegal tactics of war such as besieging towns, deliberately targeting hospitals and schools, and enable civilians to flee areas under attack.

- **Peaceful coexistence:** Reiterate Russia’s commitment to ongoing peace negotiations that will pave the way for Syrians of all faiths and backgrounds to live in peaceful coexistence once again.

While Russia cannot make this happen alone, President Putin and his Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, have shown that they are able to bring about difficult feats of negotiation such as the deal on Chemical Weapons orchestrated with the United States. A similar partnership could unlock the step-change the world wants to see in alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people.
We urge President Putin to inspire Sochi’s athletes with true Olympic leadership on Syria and wish the Russian people a successful winter Games.

List of signatories:

1. Morton Abramowitz, Former US Ambassador to Turkey
2. Andreas van Agt, Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands
3. Madeleine Albright, Former U.S. Secretary of State
4. Hallgrim Asgrimson, Former Prime Minister of Iceland
5. Lloyd Axworthy, Former Canadian Foreign Minister
6. Robert Badinter, Former Minister of Justice, France
7. Mohamed Benaissa, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Morocco
8. Shlomo Ben Ami, Former Foreign Minister of Israel
10. Sir Richard Branson, Founder of Virgin Group
11. Rony Brauman, Former President Médecins Sans Frontières
12. Sir Tony Brenton, KCMG, Former UK Ambassador to Russia
13. Hans van den Broek, Former Foreign Minister of the Netherlands
14. Gro Harlem Bruntland, Former Prime Minister of Norway
15. Gunilla Carlsson, Former Minister of International Development Cooperation, Sweden
16. Maria Livanos Cattaui, Former Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce
17. Erik Derycke, Former Foreign Minister of Belgium
19. Jan Egeland, Former United Nations Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council
20. Niels Helveg Petersen, Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Denmark
21. Peter Gabriel, Musician
22. Jaime Gama, Former Speaker of the Portuguese Parliament, Former Foreign Minister of Portugal
24. Rosario Green, Former Foreign Minister of Mexico
26. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Former NATO Secretary General
27. Mo Ibrahim, Chair of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation
28. Wadah Khanfar, President of Al Sharq Forum
29. The Most Revd. Dr Thabo Cecil Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa
30. Mark Malloch-Brown, Former United Nations Deputy Secretary-General
31. Marwan Muasher, Former Foreign Minister of Jordan
32. Sadako Ogata, Former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
33. Ana de Palacio, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Member of the Consejo de Estado of Spain
34. Thomas Pickering, Former US Ambassador to the United Nations
35. Surin Pitsuwan, Former Secretary General for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
36. Lydie Polfer, Former Foreign Minister of Luxembourg
37. **Rubens Ricupero**, former Secretary General of UN Conference on Trade and Development
38. **Malcolm Rifkind**, Former Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom
39. **Javier Solana**, Former European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy
40. **Yasmin Sooka**, Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights
41. **George Soros**, Founder, Open Society Foundations
42. **Pär Stenbäck**, Former Foreign Minister of Finland
43. **Jamal Suleiman**, Syrian Actor
44. **Erica Terpstra**, Olympic medallist, Former president of the Dutch National Olympic Committee
45. **The Most Revd. Desmond Tutu**, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town
46. **Hubert Védrine**, Former Foreign Minister of France
47. **Knut Vollebaek**, Former Foreign Minister of Norway