

**International Foundation for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (The Gorbachev Foundation)**

**To the participants in the international conference “Alarm and Hope: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” dedicated to the centenary of Academician Sakharov.**

**Dear Friends,**

With time we have come to understand more deeply the full significance of the figure of Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, to recognize more clearly the value of the legacy he left us.

At the end of the 1960s, Academician Sakharov announced that it was necessary to arrive at a politics based on “trust of open societies” and intellectual freedom. An outstanding scientist, thinker, and humanist, he became a moral authority for our society. He insisted that the prerequisites for a dignified life cannot exist outside the conditions of freedom and democracy.

During the *Perestroika* era his ideas became one of the sources of the new thinking. Based on principles of dialog and collaboration in solving global problems, the politics of new thinking brought the Cold War to an end.

At the end of the 1980s we were able to set out on a path toward a world without nuclear weapons and a total reconceptualization of international politics. The path turned out to be thorny and full of risks. Sakharov understood this, just as he understood that no other goal was possible. For me he was a great support when tough decisions had to be made and when we had to embark on a new round of democratic transformations.

Academician Sakharov took an ethical stance. It flowed from his recognition that in the second half of the twentieth century, our civilization entered a critical period in its history – when the responsibility of all political forces, social movements, and citizens became immeasurably greater than it had been even in the recent past.

In the contemporary world, where inequality and conflicts are intensifying and threats to freedom are multiplying, the significance of Sakharov’s ideas and persona will only increase. I am confident that participants in today’s conference, dedicated to the centenary of Andrei Dmitrievich, will speak about this.

I wish you all a free and fruitful discussion.

M. S. Gorbachev