

ROBERT MENENDEZ, NEW JERSEY, CHAIRMAN

BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, MARYLAND
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE
CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
TIM Kaine, VIRGINIA
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS
JEFF MERKLEY, OREGON
CORY A. BOOKER, NEW JERSEY
BRIAN SCHATZ, HAWAII
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND

JAMES E. RISCH, IDAHO
MARCO RUBIO, FLORIDA
RON JOHNSON, WISCONSIN
MITT ROMNEY, UTAH
ROB PORTMAN, OHIO
RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY
TODD YOUNG, INDIANA
JOHN BARRASSO, WYOMING
TED CRUZ, TEXAS
MIKE ROUNDS, SOUTH DAKOTA
BILL HAGERTY, TENNESSEE

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 23, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We are writing to reaffirm our opposition to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, a clear tool of Russian malign influence in Europe. We appreciate the Department's dedication to using diplomacy to build opposition to the project throughout Europe. We urge you to continue to build on such efforts to oppose Nord Stream 2, including through use of sanctions as mandated under the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act (PEESA) and the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Clarification Act (PEESCA) and as authorized pursuant to CAATSA and IEEPA. This pipeline must be stopped and your leadership is required to prevent its completion.

From its inception, construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline has been a clear geopolitical goal for Russia to exert long term influence over Europe's energy fortunes. Many across Europe have come to this conclusion, resulting the European Parliament and numerous member state governments and legislatures expressing their strong opposition to Nord Stream 2. They understand that this pipeline could potentially lock Europe into an arrangement with Russia just as the continent is looking to diversify its energy sources, including by moving towards renewables. Furthermore, Nord Stream 2 will obviate Russia's need to transit gas via Ukraine, endangering Ukraine's security and its economy as it continues to face significant Russian pressure. The Trump Administration failed to permanently stop this pipeline, and for almost four years never used the sanctions tools available to do so, so we appreciate your leadership during this critical period as the pipeline is close to completion.

We appreciate and welcome the significant effort by the professionals at the State Department, Treasury Department, and intelligence community to build sanctions cases that can withstand scrutiny in U.S. courts. The March 2 package of Navalny sanctions is a clear indication of your seriousness and dedication to confronting Kremlin aggression. This type of rigor in the development of sanctions packages is a welcome reminder for how government should work. We do, however, urge that the effort to build strong Nord Stream 2 sanctions packages be accelerated to meet the urgency of the moment. As you know, Nord Stream 2 will be fully constructed this year if construction continues unimpeded. We urge you to use all the tools available to stop the pipeline's construction. We would also emphasize that PEESA and PEESCA sanctions are not simply an authority provided to the executive branch - they are mandated in law - and publicly available information suggests that further sanctions are warranted at this time.

A full diplomatic push by the State Department to stop Nord Stream 2 necessitates conversations across eastern and western Europe. Such diplomacy is critical because many of the United States' bilateral relationships were damaged significantly over the past four years and are in need of repair. We expect however that this effort can and should happen with one central principle in mind: countering Russian malign aggression is in the vital national security interests of all of NATO, all EU members, and our partners in Eastern Europe. We cannot lose sight of this central principle as we engage diplomatically on the pipeline.

Finally, we continue to strongly support the bilateral relationship with Ukraine as it contends with an illegal Russian occupation of Crimea and regular attacks by Russian forces in Donbas. Ukraine is on a democratic trajectory and, while its progress has not always been linear, Ukrainian democrats deserve our support and assistance. In the wake of the unsettling past four years, during which former President Trump actively sought to corrupt Ukrainian governance, it is critical that the United States clearly stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We hope that President Biden will soon directly engage with President Zelenskyy, and the Department will develop a multi-faceted and senior-level framework for bilateral relations that looks to resolve Russia's war against Ukraine and the illegal occupation of Crimea, and to further the development of Ukraine's armed forces, cybersecurity, energy security, and democratic institutions. We stand ready to support these efforts in the Senate through legislation, public statements, and our engagements with friends in Ukraine.

Both President Biden and you had an admirable track record of accomplishments in deepening our relationship with Ukraine during the Obama Administration. We expect that under the Biden Administration, you will again work to bolster Ukraine's position in the region and further United States' interests in Europe. On both counts, taking all possible measures to stop the completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is a top priority. We urge you to accelerate efforts toward that end.

As you know, the Foreign Relations Committee expects consultation, not simply notification on important foreign policy decisions. We have welcomed and appreciated your collaborative approach with the committee and look forward to deepening our dialogue on all foreign policy issues even further. Thank you for your attention to the Nord Stream 2 issue and we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Chairman



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator