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SCHOOL OF NATURAL SCIENCES

SCOTT TREMAINE, PROFESSOR

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To the members of the Russian parliament,

I am writing to express my concern with the proposed plans to reform the Russian Academy of Sciences. As a member of three national scientific societies – the Royal Society of London, the Royal Society of Canada, and the National Academy of Sciences here in the U.S. – I am aware that some academies play a more central role in the scientific life of their country than others, and that some work more efficiently than others. However, the common feature of any successful academy is that it must preserve its independence from the government and be managed by the scientists themselves.

Russia has a long and exceptionally distinguished history of achievement in science, particularly in physics and mathematics, and Russian research in these subjects is one of the country's most important and distinguished exports. As the experience of the last century shows, it is far easier to destroy or disperse a country's scientific community than it is to rebuild it later. While reforms to the Academy of Sciences may well be desirable, they should be carried out slowly and deliberately with the full participation and approval of the Russian scientific community.

Sincerely,



Scott Tremaine, FRS, FRSC
Richard Black Professor of Astrophysics