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Dear colleagues,

We are writing to you in your capacity as members of Skolkovo Innovation Center Scientific Advisory Board and as colleagues whom we know personally, for whom we have great respect as scientists and responsible and decent people, and who hopefully will read our letter with a friendly and understanding eye. We hope that your understanding may also be mitigated by the fact that while all of you can be regarded as Russian scientists, each one of you is renown in an international research community in your respective research field, and two of you actually live and work now in other countries.

The reason we are writing this letter is that, the way we see it, in your new capacity, you may serve as great facilitators of improving the "climate" between the international and Russian research communities, especially as long as a great new effort by Russian Government to internationalize Russian science and technology via Skolkovo project is taking shape. Specifically, you can do that by acting in support of Russian Government's releasing Russian scientists currently imprisoned, or under active investigation by Russian security agencies, all of them being accused of "spying" activity and/or illegal transfer of allegedly secret technological information to other countries. By doing that you would definitely greatly enhance the chances of the Skolkovo project to succeed.

According to information available to us at the moment, there are seven of them: Valentin Danilov, Igor Reshetin, Mikhail Ivanov, Sergei Visir, Ivan Pet'kov, Evgenij Afanas'ev, and Svyatoslav Bobyshev.

There is no point for us to go into detailed justification of our belief that all the accusations against those scientists are not true and are dictated by the motives other than real justice or real state security. The cases against them have been made in a way very much reminiscent of an old Soviet style by using trumped-up charges and a massive pressure of internal security apparatus on the accused, the experts and the witnesses (if any).

Our main point is that with those scientists behind the bars, it would be difficult to imagine that a broad collaboration between Russian science and technology on one hand, and international scientific community, on the other hand, would be successful and effective. Because of fear that they might be arbitrary accused of spy activity, many Russian scientists may be reluctant to be open with their research counterparts and foreign funding companies; similarly, their foreign colleagues may feel that the collaboration is greatly hampered by those fears. They may also be reluctant to go into more open exchange of information and ideas with their Russian colleagues by another reason: in a situation, whereby the Russian state and its security apparatus exercises a harsh control over the exchange process, the assumption may persist that those scientific data may be used to directly benefit Russian military and security purposes. None of those factors will be instrumental in developing a successful, productive, and efficient collaboration within the Skolkovo project and similar programs underway in Russia. All this may bring back a Cold War-like atmosphere, and we don't think that this is in the best interest of all parties involved.

By its very nature, science strives on open exchange of ideas, information, data, and discussion. Of course, there were many instances in recent history, when that open exchange was severely curtailed by the factors external to science. Behind each of those instances there

were all kinds of hostility or war -- ideological, military, etc. None of them served the progress of humankind or science, if we leave aside a new weaponry development. To keep science open is in the best interest of each one of us as scientists, responsible members of free societies, and citizens of the world.

The release of those scientists has been strongly advocated by renown Russian human rights activists, such as Lyudmila Alexeeva, Elena Bonner, Vladimir Bukovsky, Sergei Kovalev, and many others in their open letter of July 2010 (see their letter attached); the letter was also signed by Prof. Yuri Ryzhov, Chairman of the Committee for Protection of Scientists, and Dr. Ernst Chernyj, Secretary of that Committee. There is no need for us to remind you that the late Prof. Vitaly L. Ginzburg, a Nobel Price winner (same as Prof. Zhores I. Alferov), was also a member of that Committee, and in 2008 he wrote a letter to RF President D. A. Medvedev in support of two convicted then physicists (Sutyagin and Danilov), see copy of his letter attached.

Concluding our letter, we hope that you would agree to act in support of Russian Government releasing those imprisoned scientists, and by doing that to greatly enhance the chances of Skolkovo project to succeed by improving the trust between Russian and international research communities. We would be happy to hear from you about your possible suggestions, requests, and considerations on the subject.

Most sincerely yours,

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