



METO's Statement at the NPT Review Conference 2022

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates and colleagues, I am addressing you today on behalf of the Middle East Treaty Organisation. [This statement was supposed to be read alongside my Iranian colleague, Emad Kiyaei, whose delayed visa processing prevented his participation today.]

The last Review conference took place in 2015 and failed to result in a final document due to lack of disarmament commitments by nuclear weapons states. However, actors including US, UK and Canada instead chose to blame the Middle East. This is but one example of ill will surrounding the realisation of global disarmament in general, and in the Middle East in particular.

In this Review conference, the chances for a final document, again, are slim. This is not the end of the world. Nuclear war, would be.

In 1995, as a central part of the NPT's indefinite extension package, the parties to the Treaty adopted the resolution on the establishment of the WMD Free Zone in the Middle East (or the zone). However, Israel being the sole possessor of nuclear weapons in the zone, and not party to the NPT, means this promise to establish the zone was also made in bad faith.

However –

In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly took the historic decision to entrust the Secretary-General with convening a conference on establishing a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region.

The first conference, which took place in November 2019, with the participation of 23 of the 24 states of the proposed zone, resulted in a consensus based political declaration.

This outcome alone contributes to regional and international trust and confidence in disarmament processes. It also reflects the participants' commitment to reaching a legally binding treaty on the Zone through an open and inclusive approach with complementary initiatives, resolutions, decisions and recommendations toward this goal.

In the second conference, which started in November 2021, states agreed to establish a working committee to continue deliberations among members of the Conference during the intersessional period. These intersessional meetings are currently ongoing under the coordination of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

In this spirit, we welcome the continued efforts of participating states and relevant international organisations to follow up on this declaration and on the outcomes of the Conference. Their commitment coupled with the strong support of the international community can accelerate the process towards the establishment of the Zone.

We call upon all states, within and outside the zone, to **avoid** measures that could hamper this important process towards the establishment of the zone.

We invite all State Parties to the NPT, to recognize that these steps and agreements so far are **historic**, and demonstrate that despite cynical arguments to the contrary, there is goodwill in the room of the UN Conference on the zone. This goodwill has brought us closer to a more secure, cooperative, and a safer region. It is imperative that we continue to maintain this constructive atmosphere when working towards the establishment of the zone.

We also believe that the establishment of a verifiable zone **will** contribute to the universalization of all WMD-related conventions and treaties. Thus, we call on all States

Parties to the NPT, when discussing the 1995 Resolution on nuclear weapon free zones, to **acknowledge that it is** already being implemented through the UN conference on the zone.

We remind states that disarmament is a process that starts with a conversation. The mere existence of this conversation taking place in the UN conference on the zone, means that disarmament in the Middle East has already begun. This precious process **must be protected** in whatever way possible.

We call on all states, when addressing the question of the Middle East, to do so in a constructive way.

We also call on **all** states to support **every** effort to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (or JCPOA) in good faith. The US's irresponsible decision to leave this **working** agreement, has jeopardised one of **the most comprehensive non-proliferation agreements in decades**. It had **nothing** to do with the security of the zone, and **everything** to do with the security of some politicians wishing to remain in power.

Thus, we call on all States Parties to the NPT to encourage relevant parties to the JCPOA to **immediately** return to full compliance, and implement their obligations and commitments, as stipulated under the agreement.

Furthermore, while calling on Israel to join the NPT as a non-nuclear state might continue to fail, it is important that we continue to do so as part of a wider call for all 9-nuclear armed states, recognized or not, to commit to a real timeline for disarmament. In particular those states already obligated under Article VI of the NPT to disarm.

Today, 77 years into the nuclear age, it is time we bring it to an end. This is very possible. All that is needed is good will. The rest is just details.