

Statement by the Secretary-General on the convening of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction

I reaffirm my firm resolve and commitment together with the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, in consultation with the States of the region, to convene a conference, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region.

I have worked closely with the co-conveners to support the facilitator, Mr. Jaakko Laajava. He has conducted intensive consultations with the States of the region to prepare the convening of the conference in 2012. I have also personally engaged with the States of the region at the highest level to underline the importance of the Conference in promoting long-term regional stability, peace and security on the basis of equality.

I have taken note of the national statements issued by the co-conveners. I wish to reaffirm the collective responsibility of the conveners to make every effort to convene the conference, as mandated. I will continue to work with them on that basis. I fully support the proposal by the facilitator to conduct multilateral consultations in the shortest possible time which will allow the conference to be convened at the earliest opportunity in 2013. I reaffirm my strong support for the facilitator and for Finland as the host Government for the Conference and express my deep appreciation for their continuing efforts.

I encourage all States of the region to continue their constructive engagement with the facilitator. I also appeal to them to seize this rare opportunity to initiate a process that entails direct engagement on security issues – a critical shortcoming at the moment – and follow-on steps leading to achieving the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the region, nuclear, chemical and biological and their delivery systems.

New York, 24 November 2012