



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

His Excellency

Dr Nabil Elaraby

Secretary-General of the League of Arab States

Helsinki, 3 August 2013

Excellency,

Thank you very much for your letter dated July 21, 2013, regarding the prospects for the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction as well as the suggested preparatory consultations.

Let me emphasize at the outset that the conveners and the facilitator remain firmly committed to their important responsibilities and would like to see a speedy launch of the process thus enabling the regional partners to start working with the substance without delay.

I have made preliminary arrangements to invite all relevant partners to Geneva on September 2-3, 2013 for preparatory consultations. For the purpose of preparing the invitations for the Geneva consultations, I will meet with the conveners on August 16 in Vienna, Austria. I would like to welcome regional representatives to participate in discussions on the relevant details, and would kindly ask the League of Arab States to nominate 1-2 persons to join me in Vienna and have the opportunity to meet the conveners along with other regional stakeholders. My office will be in touch regarding the logistics.

The conveners and I have considered in detail the four criteria for preparatory consultations outlined by the Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States in January 2013. Serious efforts have been made to fulfill those criteria and pursuant to these efforts, our intentions are as follows.

The purpose and agenda of the consultations is to build agreement on the Helsinki Conference, its agenda and modalities of organization, including the timing, structure, and working methods of the Conference as well as its rules of procedure. Agreements in the consultations will be reached through consensus.

The consultations will take place with significant United Nations input and participation by the UN High Representative for Disarmament throughout the consultations, and enjoy the full support and endorsement by the UN Secretary-General.

The invited participants to the consultations will include all prospective regional participants of the Helsinki Conference, as well as regional observers and the conveners. We believe that attendance in the consultations will demonstrate a serious commitment to the process and the Helsinki Conference itself.



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Once an agreement among the regional parties about the arrangements for the Conference has been reached in these consultations, the conveners will be able to convene the Helsinki Conference without delay, with the aim of holding it in 2013.

The Government of Finland has announced that it can organize the Conference at a short notice and has made preliminary arrangements for it to be held in December this year.

The United Nations, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and United States as conveners support the approach I have outlined above. It is my sincere hope that it would now meet with the approval of the League of Arab States.

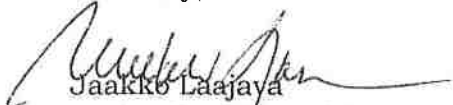
Aware of the fact that the Senior Officials Committee of the LAS is in practice in charge of the project, I am addressing this same proposal to the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Hisham Badr.

The conveners and I share the view that launching this important process now would be in the interest of all and an important signal both within the region as well as for the entire international community.

As always, I remain ready to continue discussions on the way ahead and on other relevant matters at your earliest convenience.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my highest consideration for the support and cooperation my team and I have always enjoyed by Your Excellency personally and by the League of Arab States and its Member States.

Sincerely,


Jaakko Laajava
Under-Secretary of State
Facilitator