Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

28 April 2004
English
Original: Arabic

Third session
New York, 26 April-7 May 2004

Report presented by the Syrian Arab Republic at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with a view to the realization of the goals and objectives of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East within the framework of the strengthened review process for the Non-Proliferation Treaty

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The Syrian Arab Republic was one of the first States in the Middle East to sign, in 1968, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It did so out of the conviction that the possession by any State in the Middle East of such devastating weapons would pose a threat to the region and be a source of great anxiety not only to the peoples of the region but to the countries of the entire world.

Syria has also signed a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It has committed itself and remains committed to all international requirements in that area and has submitted its facilities to yearly international inspections from its signing of that international agreement in 1992 to the present, owing to its conviction regarding the need to establish, in the Middle East, a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, and above all nuclear weapons. That conviction is shared by all Arab States, all of which have become parties to the NPT.

On the basis of that firm belief the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Security Council, in the latter half of April 2003, an initiative aimed at ridding the Middle East region of weapons of mass destruction that was supported by all the Arab States. Syria declared before the international community that it would participate with its Arab sister States and indeed all the countries of the world in transforming the Middle East region into a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical or biological.

Syria has long been a forerunner, whether in the United Nations or in the League of Arab States, in the appeal to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. It has striven tirelessly and effectively for the creation of such a zone. It has worked assiduously, through

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the annual regular sessions of the IAEA General Conference, for the adoption of a resolution for the application of the Agency's safeguards in the Middle East, requesting all parties directly concerned to consider in earnest the adoption of suitable practical measures for the implementation of the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East. It has invited the countries concerned to accede to the international non-proliferation regimes, including the NPT, as a means of completing their contribution towards a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East (document GC(46)/16). Israel, however, has not responded to that invitation, but rather insists on continuing to be the sole country in the region to remain outside the international system, refusing to accede to any international call emanating from the United Nations, whether the General Assembly or the Security Council. It will be recalled that Israel is the only country in the region that has refused to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It has also refused to sign a comprehensive safeguards agreement and to submit all its nuclear activities to the IAEA international inspection system and in fact exhibits the utmost disdain for the relevant international resolutions.

The Syrian Arab Republic was the first country, in 1986, to request IAEA to include in the agenda of the regular sessions of its General Conference an item entitled "Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat", based on an information note issued as document GC(XXX)/778, of 10 June 1986. The request was approved and the item remained on the agenda until 1992, at which time the President of the General Conference issued a presidential statement in which he explained that in order to maintain the peace process at that time, the item would be dropped. To date, however, even after the peace process came to a halt, the General Conference has consistently failed to adopt a resolution concerning the "Israeli nuclear threat", confining itself instead to the issuance of presidential statements that do not exert any pressure on Israel or make it comply with any international requirements. This is a matter of great concern in the region, owing to the enormous inequality in the balance of power stemming from Israel's possession of nuclear weapons and thus posing a threat to regional and international peace and security.

As for the resolution on the Middle East, adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the 2000 Review Conference succeeded in reaffirming that it would remain in force until its goals and objectives were achieved and that it was one of the main components of the success of the 1995 Conference. This is an important achievement of the Arab Group, which engaged in effective participation at the time and worked towards the development of a unified position on the matter. The Syrian Arab Republic, which clearly expressed its opinion on this point at the time, considers that the reasons that led to the adoption of the resolution are still valid today. Its purpose was to garner the support of most of the non-nuclear-weapon States parties for a resolution to extend the Treaty indefinitely without a vote, with the proviso that the complaints of those States should be examined subsequently — something that brooks no further delay. Those States relied on the good faith of the nuclear-weapon States in honouring their commitments, which were totally ignored thereafter. Even the study of the shortcomings of the Treaty, with a view to filling in the gaps about which States parties complained, has been ignored. Let us mention here that at every one of the Preparatory Committee's meetings the United States of America was intent on breaching and disavowing that covenant, with no other justification for its behaviour than to consecrate the

principle of double standards and to keep Israel out of the Treaty and preserve its nuclear arsenal.

Syria considers it essential that the mechanism relating to concerns over the current situation in the region, which the Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested to prepare pursuant to the final document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, should reflect current events that are ablaze in the region. Syria reaffirms that it is essential for that mechanism to exert international pressure to compel Israel to accede to the wishes of the international community, implement the resolutions of international legitimacy and to put an end to its colonialist aspirations consisting in the continued occupation of land belonging to three Arab States, namely Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, and to the development of its nuclear arsenal. At the same time, Syria stresses the need for that demand to be international, not merely Arab or regional, as an essential factor in ensuring the credibility and globality of the NPT and in realizing the principle of a just balance by avoiding a policy of double standards.

Syria and the other Arab States have continued to evince good faith for a long time, i.e., since the first days of the Treaty, relying on the good faith of the nuclear-weapon States. However, the close ties between the United States of America and Israel have brought the region to the situation of open violation of international legitimacy that we now see before us. In this way Israel has been assisted since its inception in the pursuit of its policy of aggression, continuing to this day to occupy part of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian territories and thereby threatening the peace and stability of the entire region.

Finally, Syria considers that in order to achieve the desired transparency, it is imperative first of all to make the NPT global through the exertion of pressure on Israel by the international community, in earnest and without partiality or discrimination, to abide by international commitments and resolutions and accede to the NPT as a major step towards making the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, for the matter cannot be resolved by half-solutions. The appeal for making the Middle East such a zone must not be made at the Arab or regional level only; it requires the adoption of serious international resolutions.