

His Excellency,

Ambassador Jaakko Laajava,

Under-Secretary of State,

& the Facilitator of the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction,

Excellency,

Thank you for your letter that was received on the 5th of August 2013 concerning the Geneva preparatory consultations preceded by the Vienna meeting on the 16th of August 2013. I would like to inform you that the Arab Senior Officials Committee met on the 28th & 29th of August 2013 and discussed at length the contents of your letter. In light of its details, we would like to affirm several significant points. As you are well aware, we have engaged constructively with you and the conveners for one and half year until now with a view to implement your mandate according to 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

Indeed, the Arab Senior Officials Committee have met twenty one times to seriously prepare for the way forward, shown flexibility and have come up with relevant papers in order to advance the entire process. In fact, despite the short notice of the August 16 meeting in Vienna following a major Islamic holiday, we were keen to participate and engage constructively with you and the conveners and all the regional stakeholders as you mentioned in your letter. We were surprised to find that Israel refused to participate with the conveners collectively during the meeting and Iran was not invited shedding doubts on the credibility of the entire process.

The Arab Senior Officials Committee would like to reaffirm that the process should focus on implementing the 2010 mandate of the NPT Review Conference, and not renegotiate it. Therefore, attempts to renegotiate the abovementioned mandate will only bring us backward while we should be moving forward.

The Arab Senior Officials Committee has studied your letter with a view to implement the 2010 mandate; however, the committee believes that the letter did not take due consideration of the fundamental terms of reference required to convene the delayed 2012 conference, especially the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution on the Middle East, as well as the 2010 Action Plan.

Moreover, although briefly mentioned within your letter, we did not receive any direct or clear indicators regarding the Arab criteria for the preparatory consultations, proposed by the Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States in January 2013, which are as follows:

- The establishment of a set date for the conference.**
- Holding the consultations under the auspices of the United Nations and with a set agenda.**
- Those countries that formally announce their participation in the conference can attend in the consultations.**

Indeed, many aspects were ambiguous and unclear to the Senior Officials Committee of the League of Arab States, in particular as regards:

- The role of the United Nations vis-à-vis the delayed conference.
- The required terms of reference (1995 & 2010) and whether the Agenda will explicitly refer to them.
- The role of the conveners within the conference.
- The precise date of the conference, especially in view of the proposed date by the Russian Federation on the 18th & 19th of December 2013.

The Arab Group reaffirms its commitment to participate in the preparatory consultations in Geneva, as soon as the terms of reference are clearly stipulated in the invitations, and as soon as we receive the clarifications to the above-mentioned key questions. Furthermore, we strongly believe that what is needed is a credible process to fulfill this important mandate relating to international peace and security through convening the conference which remains a means towards the final objective of establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

As you know, the Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States convened on the 1st of September 2013 in Cairo and discussed, among other issues, disarmament and non-proliferation matters. They adopted a resolution that calls on the facilitator and the conveners to hold any preparatory consultations regarding the 2012 conference under the terms of reference set by the NPT Review Conference in 2010, along with the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. The resolution also urges the Arab Senior Officials Committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the current Arab strategy vis-à-vis the delayed 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

To conclude, we urgently expect that the invitations for the postponed 2012 conference itself be sent, without further delay, in accordance with the 2010 Review Conference mandate together with the aforementioned terms of reference.

We look forward to receiving your responses to our questions and look forward following that to inviting you to hold a meeting with the Arab Senior Officials Committee during the second week of October 2013.

The Arab Group avails itself of this opportunity to express its highest consideration, and we look forward to cooperating closely with you in this process.

Sincerely,

**Ambassador Wael Al-Assad
Representative of the Secretary
General for Disarmament and
Regional Security,
League of Arab States**

**Ambassador Hisham Badr
Head of the Arab Senior
Officials Committee, and
Assistant Minister for Foreign
Affairs for International
Organizations, Egypt**