

# THE MIDDLE EAST WMD-FZ PROJECT

A PROJECT OF THE UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR  
DISARMAMENT RESEARCH

## DEAR COLLEAGUE,

I hope this email finds you and your family well. From our families to yours, we wish you a healthy and peaceful 2021. May 2021 bring us all the hope and enthusiasm to work towards a safer, better world.

Despite all the challenges that 2020 brought, it was a productive year for our team. One silver lining we found is that virtual platforms allow us to engage with a bigger and more diverse group of officials and experts in our activities.

## 2020 AT A GLANCE



5 UNIDIR publications



6 External articles



2,887 Programme page visits



87 Countries and territories visited programme page



4 Events



1,329 Visits of the ME WMD-FZ Document Depository



711 Publication downloads

## PUBLICATIONS

### NUCLEAR VERIFICATION IN A MIDDLE EAST WMD-FREE ZONE

Our most recent publication, "**Nuclear verification in a Middle East WMD-Free Zone: Lessons learned from past verification cases**" was published in Jan. 2021. The paper written by John Carlson, a Senior Fellow at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, examines specific elements of the future nuclear verification of the Zone, including which states should be included? What prohibitions and obligations should apply in the zone? How should these prohibitions and obligations be verified? How would elimination of nuclear weapons in the zone be achieved? and on what basis would the Zone treaty enter into force? The paper also examines several existing treaties and arrangements as well as lessons learned from past verification cases that regional states can draw on when developing verification for a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone. Recording of the **launch event** is now available.





Dr. Farzan Sabet, the Project Researcher, published in Dec. 2020 an op-ed in the Washington Post on **“How the assassination of an Iranian scientist could affect nuclear negotiations with Iran.”**

## RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The Project Team launched in October 2020 the **ME WMDFZ Documents Depository**. The objective of the depository is to provide a publicly accessible comprehensive resource hub on the evolution of the ME WMDFZ to date. The collection includes over 400 documents from open sources and private collections, such as official resolutions, reports, proposals, working papers and letters. Several of the documents have never been published before. The depository is a “living document” to which new documents will be added as the process evolves and additional past and new documents become available.



We plan to publish the ME WMDFZ Timeline, an interactive tool on the key milestones of the ME WMDFZ, in Feb. 2020.

## EVENTS



The 2nd meeting of the Project Reference Group took place in Oct. 2020 with the participation of the newly appointed EU Special Envoy for Non-proliferation and Disarmament Ambassador Marjolijn van Deelen. It was a good opportunity to update the group of our 2021 plans and hear their impressions on recent regional and international developments, and how those may influence the Zone negotiations.

In late October 2020, the Project also held a three day event on **Lessons from the JCPOA for the ME WMDFZ**, which examined the lessons of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for the ME WMDFZ and related regional security issues. While recognizing that the two processes are significantly different, the JCPOA's unique negotiation process, provisions, and implementation created an important set of tools that could provide valuable insights and lessons for a ME WMDFZ. With over 60 regional and international participants, the event provided an opportunity for the seven authors to present and receive feedback on their essays, which covered themes including negotiation process, structure, and format, nuclear cooperation, the fuel cycle, verification and safeguards, and compliance and enforcement. We expect to publish the essays collection shortly.



## PRESENTATIONS

The project team participated in several virtual panels and briefings. These include:

- A panel in Nov. 2020 on the future of arms control in the Persian Gulf in the “**Engulfed in the Gulf?** On a search for Europe’s future role in a turbulent region” conference hosted by the Protestant Academy LOCCUM.
- A lecture in Nov. 2020 that touch on the Iran nuclear deal in the “**Conflict and the Graphic Novel**” course at the American University in Washington DC.
- A roundtable discussion organized in Dec. 2020 by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) on **The Abraham Accords and the WMD-free Zone in the Middle East**.
- A US-Russia Nuclear Dialogue in Dec. 2020 and presenting on the “**Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other WMD: Overcoming Obstacles**”.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with us with any questions or feedback. With best wishes for your health and safety,

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