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**Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East
Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons
of Mass Destruction**

Second session

New York, 29 November–3 December 2021

**Towards the establishment of a Middle East zone free of
nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction
and their means of delivery**

Working paper submitted by the Russian Federation

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are an important aspect of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons provides for their establishment.

As a nuclear State, Russia supports the maintenance and formalization of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Our country has signed and ratified protocols to existing treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones, namely, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba) and the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia (Treaty of Semipalatinsk), thereby providing assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to the more than 100 States participating in such nuclear-weapon-free zones.

When signing the protocols, Russia made standard reservations stipulating that security assurances do not apply when States make their territory available for the transit and storage of nuclear weapons or launch an attack in alliance with nuclear countries. These reservations essentially serve as clarifications and do not affect the interests of States that faithfully uphold the “letter and spirit” of the treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Russia has completed all the domestic procedures for the signing of the protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Treaty of Bangkok).

International efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation regime have always placed great importance on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.



Russia has been an active supporter of the establishment of such a zone since the idea was first put forward.

The first proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone (at the time, no reference was made to the two other types of weapons of mass destruction – chemical and biological weapons) in that region was put forward by Egypt and Iran in 1974, when, at their initiative, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East”. From 1980 to 2017, the resolution was adopted by consensus.

The resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East adopted during the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (the 1995 resolution) marked a milestone in the process. It was sponsored by all the depositaries of the Non-Proliferation Treaty – Russia, the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons entrusted those three countries (as the depositary States for the Treaty) and the United Nations Secretary-General with convening, in 2012, a Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. Russia took active steps to ensure the fulfilment of that mandate, but the conference did not take place owing to a lack of will on the part of several key players.

The establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery was also actively discussed during the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but consensus on the issue could not be reached owing to significant disagreements among States parties. Indeed, it was the wording relating to a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the draft final document of the Conference that caused the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada to block the document’s adoption.

Owing to the lack of progress in convening a Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the context of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the General Assembly, at the initiative of the League of Arab States, adopted, on 22 December 2018, a special decision to hold the Conference at the United Nations. Russia voted in favour of that decision. The United Nations Secretary-General was entrusted with convening, no later than 2019 and on an annual basis thereafter, the Conference with the aim of elaborating a legally binding treaty on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The first Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in New York from 18 to 22 November 2019, was a landmark event both in terms of supporting the stability and sustainability of the region and in the context of global efforts towards the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The organizers were able to ensure geographical balance among the participants, which included all the States of the Middle East except Israel, as well as observers from the five nuclear powers (except the United States) and relevant international organizations.

Significantly, a comprehensive outcome declaration was agreed by consensus at the Conference. In the declaration, the participating States reaffirmed their intent to pursue, with all invited States, the elaboration of a treaty to establish a Middle East

zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by consensus by the States of the region.

The declaration contains an open-ended invitation to the States of the Middle East to join the process and a call to all other States to refrain from taking any measures that preclude the achievement of the objectives of the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. It also states that the Conference could greatly enhance regional and international peace and security and mutual trust. It was made clear that the objectives of the Conference did not include criticizing any countries.

The participating States have demonstrated their commitment to carry out further relevant research. The thematic discussions on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery that took place during two seminars (in July 2020 and February 2021), with the participation of a wide range of experts from States of the Middle East region and several relevant international bodies, could prove useful in that regard.

Russia is ready to provide comprehensive expert and political support to efforts to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery if that would be useful and valuable to the States of the Middle East.

We are convinced that any steps related to such a sensitive matter as the establishment of the world's first zone free of all types of weapons of mass destruction can be taken only following the adoption of phased decisions by consensus, with the participation of all countries of the region.

We trust that, during the second and subsequent Conferences, it will be possible to make progress in resolving practical issues related to the establishment of such a zone. The ultimate aim of this process should be the elaboration of a legally binding treaty on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

We assume that, until all the aims and objectives of the 1995 resolution have been achieved, the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery will remain on the agenda of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
