



Statement

by

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Permanent Representative of **Lebanon**

to the United Nations

at the **second** session

of the

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

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Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to congratulate Kuwait and you personally Ambassador Al Otaibi, on assuming the presidency of this Conference. I assure you of Lebanon's full support for your efforts to make the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East a success.

I also thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the General Assembly for their participation in the opening session and for the statements delivered.

Mr. President,

Lebanon participated in the first session of the Conference according to the General Assembly Decision 73/546, presided by Jordan in 2019. We congratulate Jordan on their successful presidency and welcome the adoption of the Political Declaration and the Final Report that laid the foundations for the upcoming sessions.

Nuclear free zones are key component of the disarmament agenda. Lebanon sees the establishment of such a zone in The Middle East as an urgent need for fostering security and stability in this important region of the world.

Lebanon has steadfastly supported all international efforts aimed at sparing the world the scourge and tragedies posed by nuclear weapons, out of its firm conviction that nuclear weapons harbor existential dangers to humankind and his civilizations. Lebanon also believes it to be true that "nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

Mr. President,

The convening of the second session of this Conference constitutes an opportunity to participating States to seek, in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, a common ground. It is also important to use this platform, under the umbrella of the United Nations, to express concerns, propose solutions and discuss in good faith to achieve the desired end goal of establishing a verifiable Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Israel has always kept its nuclear program and arsenal outside the framework of the international nuclear arms control regime. Its refusal to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to place its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and adopting a policy of nuclear ambiguity has led to more proliferation and became a source of regional instability. Israel's refusal to participate in this Conference is not a constructive move and leads others to seek nuclear weapons thus increasing proliferation risk and dangerous instability.

Mr. President,

We must remember, while we prepare for convening the Tenth Review Conference of the NPT next January, that the adoption of the resolution to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East at the 1995 NPT Review Conference was an integral part of the indefinite extension of the NPT.

It is undeniable that establishing such a zone strengthens the NPT and the nonproliferation regime. The 2020 NPT Review Conference should substantially focus on the Middle East by reaffirming the importance and validity of its 1995 Resolution on the Middle East until all its objectives are achieved.

The special responsibility of the nuclear weapon States, especially the obligations and commitments of the three depositary States of the Treaty that co-sponsored the Resolution, should be upheld in order to implement the resolution in its entirety. Such a commitment and a step can put the region on the much-needed path of security and stability.

The 2020 NPT Review Conference should also express its strong support to the process launched by this Conference convened pursuant to UNGA decision 73/546 as an essential mechanism for the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. It should also welcome the convening of the First and Second Sessions of the Conference and their outcomes.

It is high time that nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is tackled with the same urgency that other issues are dealt with. The NPT member states, especially the nuclear weapons states must call on all the invited States of the region to participate in this zone free of nuclear weapons conference in an open and inclusive manner to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the establishment of the zone on the basis of consensus.

Progress has been made on other arms control and nuclear proliferation issues this year and there is no reason why the Middle East should remain the exception.

The American-Russian renewal of the New Start Treaty is a positive good step on hopefully resuming the process of arms control by the big powers. The entry into force of the Treaty on the prohibition of Nuclear weapons this year is another welcome development that lends hope to non-proliferation and to a world free of nuclear weapons. The Middle East should be part of this progress and this conference puts it on the path of such an outcome.

Mr. President,

The path toward establishing the zone is long, but all countries present today are showing commitment and a keen to realizing it. This is a testament to the commitment of those present to international law and to fulfilling their obligation to the future generations to lay the foundation for a stable region free of threats of weapons of mass destruction.

I thank you Mr. President