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**Statement by
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of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN – New York
On
Definitions and Declarations,**

**Before the Second Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone
Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
New York, 29 November – 3 December 2021**

In the Name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Mr. President,

As a practice for each international treaty, here, we will need to recognize and define an exhaustive list of key terms employed by the treaty and its subsidiary documents or institutions. As always, each term should be clearly as well as meticulously defined and understood for the purpose of its respective treaty. The definition alone can affect the rights and obligations of parties of a treaty, therefore the more clarity we have about these terms, the less conflicting interpretation or interchangeable understandings can arise.

However, while there can be different approaches in this process, my delegation believes that although we can utilize the definitions already concluded in the treaties or conventions like the NPT, BWC, CWC and CTBT by default, we should also rely on new and specific terms that will require definition as witnessed so far.

A very important key term in this regard is the term of the Middle East which has not been defined as of yet. In fact, in the context of NWFZs, each zone applies to the entire territories of all of its states-parties. The territory is understood to include all land holdings, internal waters, territorial seas and archipelagic waters. And yet we know for a fact that up to now in at least two cases, the limits of the respective zones have been challenged by all or some of the Nuclear Weapon States.

Given the historical and tense security background in the Middle East and the absence of an internationally accepted definition of the region, it seems very difficult to conclude a definition of this region in the coming future.

In this situation, a pragmatic solution is to enlist the name of the regional parties that are invited to participate in the Conference. It is worth mentioning that the alternative suggestions do not provide a solid base accordingly. The suggestion to refer to a report by the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East contained in paragraph 4 of the document GOV/2018/38-GC(62)/6 is just an example of this case. In a footnote in this paragraph, all states of the Middle East Region include members of the League of Arab States, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel. A subsequent footnote of the same paragraph specifies that the designation employed does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever concerning the legal status of any country or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

Even though the League of Arab States was itself one of the observers of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, so far, no decision has been taken to accredit such an attribute and status to an observer in defining a key term like the Middle East. Furthermore, from a legal perspective and as the experience confirms the very membership status of this League can be subject to change either by its decisions or initiative of any given member state; a fact that can severely affect the status of such a treaty in the Middle East. Therefore, the meant treaty in the Middle East should not rely on a changing basis in terms of its members.

We believe that a practical way to overcome these outstanding issues is to create a technical group with a mandate to recognize and define the needed key terms while taking into account all possible angles and implications without duplication or redundancy.

I thank you, Mr. President.