



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

**Statement by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
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As delivered



New York
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Madame President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address this Conference on behalf of Secretary-General António Guterres, who is away from UN Headquarters on official mission

At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to Ms. Jeanne Mrad, Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations on her endorsement as the President of the third session of the Conference.

I would also like to thank the State of Kuwait for the able leadership and positive outcomes achieved during its Presidency of the second session.

Today, the world's security landscape is marred by heightened tensions and increasing strategic risks. Several geopolitical tensions and conflicts, not least the war in Ukraine, are shaking the international system and exacerbating underlying tensions to an unprecedented level in decades. The United Nations Charter is facing some of the toughest tests to date and consequently the international community must work hard to uphold it.

It is regrettable that the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was unable to reach consensus on a final outcome. However, the draft outcome, though far from perfect, still contained useful elements, especially those related to the validity of all previous disarmament commitments, on increased transparency and accountability, and on steps to reduce nuclear risk, as well as recognition of this particular conference process and the progress it has made. The inability of the Review Conference to adopt the draft outcome does not mean States cannot implement the commitments made in its text. I urge all States to implement those commitments voluntarily and thereby restore momentum as we enter a new review cycle already next year, including those on the full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East issue.

I would like to share three key messages at this conference.

First is the importance of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as crucial to the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, and to regional and international security. I echo the Secretary-General's consistent calls to all parties to return to full implementation of the Plan, including the enhanced transparency and verification measures under the authority of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

It is imperative that the relevant parties return to the Vienna talks to negotiate a full return to the JCPOA. As the Secretary-General said, the importance of restoring the Plan should not be underestimated, nor should the positive impact of its restoration on the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In the interim, all parties should refrain from any activities that would undermine the purpose and spirit of the JCPOA.

Second, I would like to stress the Secretary-General's consistent and clear message on the use of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons is intolerable and impunity for their use is equally unacceptable. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. Failure to do so is not only a failure to bring justice to the victims of these inhumane weapons but also continues the steady erosion of the taboo against the use of chemical weapons. To prevent the heinous use of chemical weapons it is the responsibility of all States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to ensure they are fully compliant with the Convention.

Despite these challenges, I am pleased to note the positive outcomes of the two previous sessions of this Conference, which have been welcomed by States in the region and of the international community, as encouraging signs of engagement in dialogue and building trust and confidence, contributing to stability and security in the region.

Third, we are just two weeks away from the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the primary international framework for tackling the threat of biological warfare. I hope that States Parties at the Review Conference take decisions to strengthen the BWC in the future. We are convinced that Member States will continue to support the BWC to strengthen biosafety and biosecurity around the world through the implementation and universalization of the BWC.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The benefits and positive impact of nuclear-weapon-free zones on regional security and prosperity have been clearly manifested in those regions where such zones have been established. The concept of the Middle East zone goes beyond banning nuclear weapons and encompasses a ban on all weapons of mass destruction, which States of the Middle East region have committed themselves to achieving. I call on all States in the region to join this process to cooperate in delivering this important public good.

The comprehensive and novel approaches adopted by the States of the Middle East to establish such a zone in the region through this conference process merits full support. The ultimate achievement of the zone will meaningfully reinforce the global disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, and thus contribute to peace and security well beyond the region.

With your collective effort, the conference process has been open, inclusive and constructive. The deliberations that you have undertaken on some fundamental issues related to the future Middle East zone have laid a solid foundation for further substantive work. The working committee established by the Conference plays an important complementary role in continuing the substantive work during the intersessional periods between the annual conferences.

It is also commendable that you have committed to building on the valuable experience and lessons learned from other regional processes in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as tapping the knowledge and expertise of both academia and practitioners in these fields.

I encourage you to maintain this good momentum and further the collective efforts to work towards the fulfilment of the long-sought objective of achieving the zone and contributing to our common responsibility to rid the world of all weapons of mass destruction.

I also want to take this opportunity to once again call upon all members of the international community to assist in this important undertaking.

And, finally, I once again pledge the full support by my Office and myself in your noble endeavour.

The Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" recognizes the crucial role of regional initiatives in supporting the global peace and security architecture. It is also high time for us to review existing approaches to disarmament and join forces to craft a new vision for the future, including updating our vision for disarmament so as to guarantee human, national and collective security. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and other United Nations partners are engaging with States and other stakeholders in bringing this vision to fruition.

I wish you productive deliberations over the coming days, and I thank you very much for your attention.