

Islamic Republic of

I R A N

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

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

New York, 18 November 2019

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

Madam President,

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of this august Conference. I am confident that, with your diplomatic skill and experience, the Conference will conclude its work with success. I also would like to take this opportunity to commend Secretary-General António Guterres and Madam Nakamitsu, for their efforts to help convene this Conference.

Madam President,

The idea of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was first proposed by Iran in 1974. It is based on the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories as has been acknowledged in Article VII of the NPT.

The realization of this idea is long overdue and, in spite of the Resolution of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and numerous consensual annual resolutions of the General Assembly as well as the strong support provided by other international and regional fora, regrettably has not been materialized yet. Moreover, the NPT States Parties have consistently and strongly supported the establishment of such a zone as a matter of priority in consensual final documents of the successive NPT Review Conferences.

For nearly 40 years, the UNGA annual Resolution on the “establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone in the region of the Middle East” was adopted by consensus, representing strong international support for its realization. However, in recent years, at the request of Israel and the

U.S., it has been adopted by a vote. Unfortunately, it was also the case in the adoption of the UNGA decision on convening this very Conference.

At the practical level, the current volatile situation of the region proves more than ever the urgent need to establish such a zone when the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the region is real.

The Israeli regime with its more than 200 nuclear weapons in several types, including suitcase bombs, tactical nuclear weapons, EMP Strike capabilities, Enhanced Radiation Weapons, and nuclear land mines remains the only possessor of nuclear weapons and a non-party to the NPT in the Middle East while also brazenly threatening regional countries with nuclear annihilation. Additionally, while it possesses different categories of chemical weapons and an undeclared biological warfare program, it is not a party to the CWC and BWC. Therefore, it is clear that the formation of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East requires that Israel must join all related international legally binding instruments. First and foremost, it must join the NPT without any precondition and to place all its nuclear facilities and activities under the comprehensive safeguards of the IAEA.

There is another obstacle to establish such a zone in the Middle East. The latest NPR of the U.S. allows the use of nuclear weapons even against the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT. This is contrary to the required role and responsibility of a NWS regarding a nuclear-weapon-free zone, be it in the Middle East or elsewhere.

Furthermore, in the contemporary history, the most frequent and systematic use of chemical weapons has occurred in the Middle East, one example of which is the use by Saddam of chemical weapons against Iranian and Iraqi citizens, necessitating the establishment of a WMD-free zone in this region.

Recalling the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, as an essential element of the outcome of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and of the basis on which the Treaty was extended indefinitely, and the decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the implementation of that Resolution, through the convening of a conference in 2012, we stress that the Resolution and all relevant decisions of the NPT Review Conferences on the subject remain valid until their objectives are achieved. Therefore, we underline once again that convening of this Conference, however important, is without prejudice to the validity of the 1995 resolution and other decisions on the subject adopted within the context of the NPT Review Conferences and shall not be construed as their replacement. Accordingly, the NPT Review Conferences must continue considering this question as a matter of priority.

Madam President,

The policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran on WMD has always been consistent. On several occasions, it has been elaborated by our Supreme Leader, including in his message to the International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, in Tehran in April 2010, wherein he said: "We believe that, besides nuclear weapons, other types of weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological weapons, also pose a serious threat to humanity. The Iranian nation, which is itself a victim of chemical weapons, feels more acutely than any other

nation the danger caused by the production and stockpiling of such weapons, and is prepared to do everything in its power to counter such threats. We consider the use of such weapons as haram (religiously forbidden) and believe that it is everyone's duty to make efforts to secure humanity against this great disaster".

Therefore, this concrete policy not only stems from our Islamic doctrine but also a rational calculation of our national interest as well as our bitter experience of being a victim of the use of chemical weapons.

Moreover, as a party to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the NPT, CWC and BWC, and a signatory to the CTBT and having in place a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA and being in full compliance with its relevant international legal obligations, Iran has proven how strong its policies regarding WMD are.

Madam President,

Let me now touch upon some key but general technical points pertinent to the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East:

- 1- The main and only mandate of the Conference is to negotiate a treaty on the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. Therefore, any precondition put forward for participation in the Conference or on the establishment of such a zone is unacceptable.
- 2- The rejection of the USA and Israel to participate in the Conference is a major hurdle in its success. Practically, any possible treaty on the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East will be meaningless and ineffective in the absence of an entity possessing all types of WMD.
- 3- Equally, it is the case with respect to the U.S. as a NWS, whose unconditional, non-discriminatory, effective and irrevocable legal assurance, along with such assurances of all other NWS, to all States of the region against the threat or use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, is an essential requirement for the establishment of a WMD-free zone.
- 4- The NWS negative security assurances are required for the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East.
- 5- The scope of the treaty to be negotiated should merely cover nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.
- 6- We underline the essential importance of an efficient verification system for a possible WMD-free zone. We must take advantage of the current related mechanisms in establishing the verification system for the zone, noting that while the international community has had a verification system agreed upon and implemented in the field of nuclear and chemical weapons, there has been no similar systems concerning biological weapons.
- 7- To guarantee the success of the Conference, the participation of all regional countries is crucial.

8- Likewise, to enable all participating States to protect their interests, it is also necessary for the Conference to conduct its entire work and adopt all its decisions, both substantive and procedural, by consensus, meaning the absence of formal objection by any of the participating States.

9- At the same time, the official adoption of the text of the draft treaty shall be conducted at an official meeting of the Conference wherein all regional countries shall be present and participate in decision making in favor of its adoption.

10- Bearing in mind that granting unconditional, non-discriminatory, effective and irrevocable legal assurances by all NWS to all States of the region against the threat or use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances is needed, active participation of all NWS, particularly the three co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, as well as their commitment for granting such assurances are essential. They must respect the status of the zone and fully implement their obligations.

Madam President,

In closing, Iran reiterates that with resolve and patience, and with the support and assistance of the United Nations, we will finally succeed in the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East.

I thank you, Madam President.