



**CONFERENCE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MIDDLE EAST ZONE
FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPON AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

18th November 2019, ECOSOC Chamber

**REMARKS BY H.E. TIJJANI MUHAMMAD-BANDE,
PRESIDENT OF THE 74TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Madame President,
Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the Secretary-General for convening this meeting. To prevent threats to global security, it is imperative to engage in a dialogue like this so that we reach agreements based on common concerns.

Today, there are approximately 15,000 nuclear weapons stockpiled in nine countries.

We know that any use of nuclear weapons would be a humanitarian and ecological catastrophe, causing

irreparable damage to communities and life. We cannot, in good conscience, ignore these risks.

A nuclear weapons-free world is one additional guarantor to safeguard civilization. Multilateralism is our only way forward on this issue; as such, nuclear disarmament is a top priority of the United Nations.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Next year, the 2020 NPT Review Conference will take place. I trust that the Review and related discussions will propel a stronger commitment towards a nuclear weapon-free world.

Excellencies,

In 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted. This legally-binding instrument for nuclear disarmament includes prohibitions against developing, testing, acquiring, using or even threatening to use, nuclear weapons.

On the path to peace, every step counts. Each signature and ratification of this landmark treaty is crucial

and it is only once we reach fifty ratifications that the Treaty can fully enter into force. We commend states that have signed or ratified the Treaty and encourage those who have not done so to join in this important action. Indeed, the Treaty is a testament to the continued need for, and utility of, multilateralism.

In this context, Excellencies, I also welcome the Agenda for Disarmament, launched last year by the Secretary-General. The Agenda seeks to engage stakeholders on practical measures to generate useful outcomes in ongoing negotiations and other initiatives.

This is precisely what we need: fresh ideas from all stakeholders, reinforced by political will to achieve tangible progress towards sustainable peace.

Excellencies,

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones can help to consolidate efforts towards peace and security and strengthen the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, as stipulated by Article VII of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Already there are five regions that are free of nuclear weapons. Member States of the concerned region will determine the terms of both designation and the manner in which they should come into existence.

The peaceful use of nuclear energy is a sovereign right of all States in support of their socio-economic, scientific and technological development. Nuclear-weapon-free zones should not prevent the use of nuclear science for peaceful purposes.

Excellencies,

As we approach the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, nuclear disarmament remains as important as ever. Achieving a nuclear weapon-free world is a universal aspiration for ensuring peace and security as we move forward towards the centenary of our Organization.

I hope this Conference will prove to be a timely opportunity to exchange views on how best to ensure a peaceful and secure world for the people we serve. We must, therefore, remain determined to fulfill the words of the

preamble to the UN Charter: "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

I thank you.

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