

**Statement by
Mr. Heidar Ali Balouji
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of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
Before the fourth session of
the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear
Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
New York, 13-17 November 2023**

**Thematic Discussions:
Identified issues**

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

Mr. President,

To recap what we have discussed so far, I would like to address briefly those topics that have been discussed and reflected in the conference reports. It should be emphasized that the idea is not to offer an exhaustive list or summary but rather a brief overview of some of the elements that are not discussed in this session of the Conference.

On general obligations, as we have expressed very clearly in the previous sessions and meetings of the Conference, and as learned from other regional nuclear weapon zone-free treaties, we are well aware of the fact that the current relevant international instruments tackle a variety of activities. Notably, some of the existing similar treaties have overlooked a comprehensive prohibition. However, we strongly believe that our Treaty should never have such shortcomings. Therefore, these prohibitions must include research, development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, transit, receipt, deployment, stationing and the use or threat of use of all WMDs.

These prohibitions must be applicable within designated territories and under the jurisdiction of the regional parties through the implementation of the Treaty, which will have mechanisms of verification and control to enforce its obligations.

The main objective of the Treaty to establish a Middle East zone free of WMDs is to create a region in which the possession, development, production and use of

WMDs are prohibited. This would reduce the risk of conflict and increase stability in the region as well as serve as a step towards the eventual elimination of such weapons globally. A thorough review of all existing documents both similar and related can guide us on the main features and direction of such a Treaty in the Middle East. In this context, we suggest that all parties in the region commit to not only non-proliferation but also the full and effective implementation of relevant international treaties and agreements, as well as the new Treaty itself, for its elaboration and implementation.

To achieve this objective, the Treaty would be based on several key principles, including the non-proliferation of WMDs, the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the promotion of international cooperation and respect for the sovereignty of states in the region. These elements could be specified in the preamble and introductory parts of the Treaty.

In addition to what we have raised so far under this topic, we would like to highlight that to effectively establish a Middle East zone free of WMDs, the Treaty would need to have effective pillars and set out comprehensive core obligations for states in the region. These obligations would include:

1. National commitments: States in the region must make a formal commitment to the establishment of a WMD-free zone and the fulfillment of their obligations under the Treaty. In this regard, within a specific timeline and before the adoption of the Treaty in a diplomatic conference, the participating states should agree to conclude with the International Atomic Energy Agency and enforce the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement before the Treaty enters into force. A similar approach the CWC and the BWC should be considered and applied. One important observation to note is that comprehensive prohibitions should be put in place for the entire cycle of related weapons. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of safeguarding peaceful facilities and materials to prevent any potential attacks either physical, kinetic or cyber-attack that may result in similar catastrophe like the real use of a weapon of mass destruction.

2. Verification: The Treaty should establish a comprehensive, appropriate and effective verification regime for each type of weapon of mass destruction. Given the lessons learned, non-politicization and protection of the information gathered through the verification mechanism should be a high priority for the implementing organization. The treaty should prevent violations of the confidentiality regime, and if they occur, they should be penalized;

3. International cooperation: While rejecting unilateral coercive measures, the Treaty should provide international cooperation and assistance in the support of establishing a WMD-free zone, including the sharing of and unimpeded access to the relevant information, material and technology for peaceful purposes;
4. Conflict resolution: The Treaty should provide a framework for the peaceful resolution of related disputes through clarification, consultation and cooperation; and
5. Security assurances: The Treaty should provide security assurances to all states in the region, including the guarantee that the use or threat of use of WMDs will not be tolerated and that states will not be subject to attack or threatened with attack.

Now, turning to the work of the Working Committee, as a follow up to the issue of glossary of terminology, we are of the view that developing such a terminology is a key step in the elaboration of the Treaty. Furthermore, this glossary is crucial in ensuring that all Treaty members have a collective understanding of the key terms and definitions used in the Treaty. This will help to prevent any misunderstandings or misinterpretations that could have serious consequences in the context of a Treaty aimed at addressing the proliferation of WMDs.

In this vein, a comprehensive glossary of terminology for a Treaty on a Middle East Zone free of WMDs should include definitions for key concepts, such as weapons of mass destruction, proliferation and verification. It should also include definitions for terms specific to the region, such as the Middle East and the countries that fall within its boundaries.

In addition to these core terms, the glossary should also include definitions for any technical or scientific terms that may be used in the Treaty.

We have been made aware time and again that the best option to accelerate the task for the sake of brevity and in order avoid duplication or starting from scratch is to rely on the existing terminology and definition of the terms to be used in the Treaty. This option seems attractive in the beginning, however, there is serious doubt about it fitting the purpose, especially in the context of such a Treaty with a broad scope to include the three type of weapons of mass destruction without any conflicting interpretation of the terms used in the Treaty.

In closing, we stand ready, as always, to contribute to this lofty goal in collaboration with regional and international partners of the expected zone.

I thank you, Mr. President.