

Statement by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

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

New York, 18 – 22 November 2024

Mr President,

On behalf of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), I am pleased to address this Fifth Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

We join others in congratulating you, Mr President, for having been appointed to chair this session.

The IAEA has attended, as an observer, all the previous sessions of the Conference.

Since this Conference began, the IAEA has also participated in other meetings related to the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including workshops organized by UNODA and UNIDIR. The IAEA also delivered presentations to the intersessional meetings of the Working Committee. Since last year's session of this Conference, the IAEA delivered three presentations at two meetings of the 2024 Working Committee of the Conference: one under the thematic panel "Overview of existing global frameworks/arrangements for peaceful uses", held on 30 April 2024, and other two presentations under the thematic panels "Overview of existing global frameworks/arrangements for verification" and "IAEA regional arrangements", held on 1 July 2024. We hope those were informative and useful.

The technical background documentation which the IAEA provided to the 2023 session remains valid, and provides a comprehensive review of the work undertaken by the IAEA on modalities of the application of safeguards in the Middle East and its role under the existing nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) treaties and regional arrangements.

As described in the background document, the IAEA plays an essential role in verifying States' compliance with their non-proliferation and safeguards obligations to use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes.

The existing NWFZ treaties require the parties to accept comprehensive IAEA safeguards. The safeguards agreements required under these NWFZ treaties are equivalent in scope to the comprehensive safeguards agreements (CSAs) required under Article III.1 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Central Asian NWFZ Treaty further requires States parties to conclude not only a CSA, but also an additional protocol to it (AP).

The IAEA's background documentation also provides information on the status of safeguards agreements, small quantities protocols (SQPs) and additional protocols (APs) for the States in the Middle East region. By way of update: since the first (2019) session of this Conference, Sudan has amended its original SQP, United Arab Emirates has rescinded its original SQP and the State of Palestine has brought into force a CSA in connection with the NPT, with an SQP based on the modified text. Saudi Arabia has decided to rescind its original SQP effective 31 December 2024.

To assist States in the implementation of their obligations arising from those agreements and protocols, Director General of the IAEA, Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi, launched in 2020 the IAEA Comprehensive Capacity-Building Initiative for SSACs [State system of accounting for and control of nuclear material] and SRAs [State or regional authority responsible for safeguards], commonly known as 'COMPASS'. This initiative builds on existing IAEA assistance to States by providing tailored support to meet the State's safeguards related needs. Its multifaceted assistance include support in the areas of outreach; legal and regulatory framework for safeguards; training; information technology; procurement of equipment; and technical expertise. Seven States participated in the pilot phase of COMPASS, including two States from the Middle East region: Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Since taking office in December 2019, Director General of the IAEA, Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi, has continued to consult and work with the States of the Middle East region to find the common ground required to develop model agreements as a necessary step towards the establishment of a Middle East NWFZ. During meetings with senior officials from States of the Middle East region and other Member States, the Director General has underlined the importance of an early application of comprehensive Agency safeguards on all nuclear activities in the Middle East region. He has also recalled the IAEA's contributions to advance the establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East and has expressed the IAEA's availability to continue contributing to this process as appropriate and in line with the relevant IAEA General Conference resolutions. The Director General has called on all countries which are not party to the NPT to adhere to it.

Mr President, distinguished delegates, thank you for giving us the floor. We join others in wishing you, Mr President, every success in the challenging work ahead.