Statement at the informal on-line workshop on 8 July

Thank Amb. Bahous, ODA and other organizers of this on-line workshop on good practices and lessons learned. I am sure that it would be helpful in promoting the issue, including the goals and objectives of the 2019 conference.

I am grateful for inviting Blue Banner to share its views on issues related to NWFZs. Based on my paper I would like to make the following 3 points:

***One. Mongolia’s role***.

Unlike the five established zones, Mongolia is considered as a state with a unique nuclear-weapon-free status. The P5 are not prepared to accept the notion of a single-State zone believing that doing so would set a precedent and discourage establishing regional (conventional) zones. Mongolia’s frank talks with the P5 resulted in General Assembly resolution entitled “Mongolia’s international security and nuclear-weapon-free status”. In it the Assembly welcomed Mongolia’s initiative and its efforts to consolidate it, but due to P5 position it is still shy from officially recognizing and welcoming the status. After years of talks and lengthy discussions, in 2012 the P5 signed a joint declaration pledging to respect the status and not to contribute to any act that would violate it. As to recognition of Mongolia as a single-State zone, the work is still in progress.

***Two. Issue of single-State NWFZ***. The 1975 study of NWFZs in all its aspects has underlined that NWFZs can be established not only by groups of states, entire continents or large geographical regions, but also by small groups of states and (I underline) ***even individual countries***. International developments show that in the not so distant future other single-State zones might emerge. Hence it is time for the international community to consider the issue of single-State zones. Thus for example in South Asia, where militarily two most influential states have become de facto nuclear-weapon states thus promotion of a South Asian NWFZ has come to an abrupt halt. Now ideas are being flagged by some in the region to become a single-State zone either by legislating it in the Constitution or others by adopting special legislation on the issue. Beyond the South Asian region, one can look at other non-nuclear-weapon states that are not members of political-military alliances nor form part of established zones. There are at least a dozen states, including some small island states, that might choose to clearly declare their non-nuclear status and acquire from the P5 (where deemed needed) or regional powers commitments that their status would be respected and not violated. Such understandings would contribute to confidence and reduce further the areas of nuclear-weapon related activities at a time when vertical nuclear arms race is underway. The vertical arms race might “require” placing if not actual weapons then supporting structures such as surveillance, tracking or homing devices to serve the nuclear weapon system. In other words it is time, 45 years after the first study on NWFZs, that a second study to be undertaken that would reflect the rich experience accumulated and lessons learned. Special attention needs to be dedicated to the Middle East and Northeast Asian regions. UNIDIR could undertake a study on the emerging single-State zone concept and practice.

***Three. Establishing a NEA-NWFZ***. Denuclearizing the Korean peninsula is becoming one of the urgent topics on nuclear security agenda. However, to be more effective a broader approach is needed, i.e. denuclearizing the entire Northeast Asian region, meaning establishing a zone consisting of the two Koreas and Japan, and the U.S., Russia and China providing security assurances to them, known as the 3+3 formula. Establishing such a zone is under discussion, though unofficially, mainly at the levels of think tanks and CSOs. The discussions have produced a list of useful ideas and proposals.

Blue Banner has undertaken a study of the issue and has come to a conclusion that a bold conceptual approach is needed to have the ball rolling, first and foremost from the U.S. and North Korea on the very concept of denuclearizing the peninsula. North Korea needs to make a decision in principle regarding the denuclearization based on its legitimate interests, and not only “work towards” that goal. On the other hand, the U.S. needs to review its nuclear umbrella doctrine, at least with respect to South Korea and Japan, since, if or when a zone is established, each ally separately and together with the U.S. would still have overwhelming conventional advantage. Such tailored ‘non-nuclear’ extended deterrence would allow to seriously take up the issue of establishing a zone. Unlike the JCPOA or the Budapest memoranda, the NWFZ security assurance would be legally binding so that no change of government or administration would allow reneging on or violating the agreement. It would also be politically more acceptable if, within the framework of the zone, the U.S. provides security assurances to the DPRK, while Russia and China to its two allies as parties to the zone. The assurances provided by the three nuclear-weapon states would signal their serious cooperation and that the assurances would be credible for their recipients. Content wise, the zone treaty or a separate protocol to it could contain provisions on providing broad economic assistance to North Korea in the form of a mini Marshall Plan that would benefit all states or groups of states involved. At the same time it would strengthen confidence and the regional economic cooperation. This would result in a win-win outcome for all.