14 July 2021
English
Original: Arabic

Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
Second session
New York, 29 November–3 December 2021

Working paper submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic to the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

New York, 29 November–3 December 2021

I. Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

1. The Syrian Arab Republic was one of the first States in the Middle East region to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in 1968. That reflected its conviction about the threat to regional and international peace and security posed by the possession by States of nuclear weapons or access to such weapons by non-governmental entities or terrorist gangs. The Syrian Arab Republic has remained scrupulous about implementing its international obligations under the Treaty, which it regards as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and the achievement of total nuclear disarmament, and the international reference that accords the States parties the inalienable right to acquire nuclear technology for use in various peaceful applications.

2. The Syrian Arab Republic complies fully with the provisions of the comprehensive safeguards agreement it concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1992 in accordance with article III of the Treaty. A national system has been set up to account for and monitor the movement of nuclear materials, and all the necessary measures and facilities have been put in place to facilitate the work of IAEA inspectors.

3. The Security Council should give serious consideration to the initiative put forward on behalf of the Group of Arab States by the Syrian Arab Republic when it was a member of the Security Council – in April 2003 and again in December 2003 – to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, with a view to reinforcing international peace and security. Syria has declared before the international community that it will take part, along with the other Arab States and other peace-loving countries, in the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately,

Please recycle

the United States has blocked that initiative and prevented the Security Council from adopting a resolution on it, all in an effort to protect Israel as that country shirks its international obligations.

4. Even though the United States is a nuclear State and a depository State of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as one of the three States that sponsored the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, it has unfortunately failed make any effort to establish such a region because it is trying to protect Israel. Both of those countries declined to attend the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in 2019. The Syrian Arab Republic regrets that States that sponsored the Non-Proliferation Treaty are obstructing any effort to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in order to protect Israel and allow it to remain outside any international nuclear supervision.

II. The establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction

5. The Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the United Nations should have a fundamental role in establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of General Assembly resolutions, the most recent of which was General Assembly resolution 75/33 of 7 December 2020 entitled "The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East", and of IAEA General Conference resolution 64/15 of 24 September 2020 entitled "Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East".

6. The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction would be an important step for nuclear disarmament that would make a major contribution to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, promote regional and international peace and security, and preserve the credibility of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

7. By acceding to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Syrian Arab Republic demonstrated its commitment to the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, in the Middle East. It has given the lie to pretexts used by Israel to avoid the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

8. The Syrian Arab Republic rejects attempts by certain of the States that sponsored the Middle East resolution to shirk their responsibilities, and stresses that the failure of the international community to fulfil its commitments on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has had negative repercussions for the Middle East region and the world at large in the more than 25 years since the 1995 resolution was adopted. In that connection, the Syrian Arab Republic expects practical and proactive steps to be taken to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The obstruction of the establishment of such a zone is contrary to the provisions of the resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction adopted by 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

9. The Syrian Arab Republic insists that responsibility for implementing that 1995 resolution and the related action plan on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction adopted by the 2010 Review Conference, both of which were reaffirmed at subsequent review conferences,

rests with the three depository States that co-sponsored the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

10. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes that the main reason for the lack of progress is the continued cover provided by the United States for the intransigent Israeli refusal to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and place all its nuclear activities under IAEA supervision, and its disregard for all the relevant Security Council and the General Assembly resolutions.

11. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes the need to comply fully with the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which was an integral part of a package that included three decisions and a resolution adopted without a vote that contributed to the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995. That resolution has been regarded by all subsequent review conferences since 1995 to date as remaining in force until its objectives are achieved.

12. The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East should in no way be linked to the peace process in the region. It also reiterates that any identification of the countries in the Middle East region for this purpose in no way constitutes a definition of the region, but is used only for the purposes of the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East to be held from 28 November to 3 December 2021.

III. Nuclear disarmament

13. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes that the main challenge to nuclear disarmament as a major step towards the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is, above all, the lack of genuine political will on the part of the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their legal obligations under article VI of the Treaty and implement their explicit pledges to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals. That merely compounds the frustration of non-nuclear-weapon States, which will inevitably undermine the validity and credibility of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and reduce its effectiveness, thereby adversely affecting international peace and security.

14. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes the need for nuclear-weapon States to abide by article 1 of the Treaty. In that connection, the Syrian Arab Republic stresses the obligation of nuclear-weapon States to undertake not to supply Israel with any nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or any direct or indirect control of such weapons or devices, and not to assist, encourage or induce Israel in any way whatsoever to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or gain control over such weapons or explosive devices.

15. The Syrian Arab Republic calls on the international community to pressure Israel to renounce its possession of nuclear weapons as an important confidence-building measure and major step towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Israel must also accede unconditionally to the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear party and place all its nuclear activities and facilities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime.

16. The Syrian Arab Republic commends the efforts of the Secretary-General to convene the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction that was held from 18 to 22 November 2019. It reaffirms its readiness to cooperate with the United Nations and with other international organizations to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.