



**United Nations Office  
for Disarmament Affairs**

**Side Event on the “Progress and Prospects for the Conference on the  
Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other  
Weapons of Mass Destruction”**

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As delivered



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Your Excellency, Ambassador Omar Al Kathiri, President of the Seventh Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations,

Excellencies,

Distinguished panelists,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you today.

I wish to thank the Permanent Mission of the Sultanate of Oman for co-organizing this important side event on the margins of the Eleventh Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Today's discussion comes at a particularly important moment.

As States parties and the wider international community meet to comprehensively review the implementation of the NPT, the objective of establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains a longstanding aspiration to be fulfilled by States in the region with the support of the international community, including through the on-going Conference process to establish such a zone.

Efforts to achieve this objective started decades ago. In 1974, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3263 "Establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", co-sponsored by Egypt and Iran, and thereafter the UNGA has adopted resolutions on the same subject annually. The Final Document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-I) in 1978 recognized the importance of establishing a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East as a critical measure for regional and international security. At the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the Resolution on the Middle East was adopted as an integral part of the package of decisions that enabled the indefinite extension of the Treaty. That resolution remains a foundational political commitment.

Its full implementation is not only linked to the credibility and integrity of the NPT but also carries profound significance for peace and security in the Middle East region and beyond.

Over the years, progress on convening the conference mandated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference stalled. As a consequence, in 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted decision 73/546, requesting the Secretary-General to convene annual sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, until the conclusion of a legally binding treaty on the Middle East zone. This Conference process has, for the first time, provided, a dedicated multilateral platform through which States of the region can officially engage in dialogues and negotiations in a structured, sustained and inclusive way to work towards establishing the Middle East zone.

I commend all participating States, under successive rotating presidencies, for their unwavering political commitment to seeking solutions to address each other's concerns and address gaps through dialogue and engagement. This is of particular significance and value in the current regional conflict context. I also commend participating States for adopting a transparent, inclusive, and constructive approach in the Conference process. Despite differences on issues under discussion, participating States have pursued a pragmatic and step-by-step approach in their deliberations on key aspects of establishing the Middle East zone, hence making encouraging progress on those matters.

There's a growing sense of ownership among the States involved, manifested by several countries of the region hosting special events, working committee meetings, and increased involvement of their respective government agencies, regional organizations and local academia/researchers and media as well as the general public.

As the Conference enters its seventh session under the presidency of the Sultanate of Oman, there is an opportunity to build on this momentum and continue to achieve progress.

This is important because the establishment of such a zone would contribute significantly to regional and international peace and security. It would strengthen confidence, reduce risks, and support the broader goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. It would help prevent the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences associated with weapons of mass

destruction. It would also reinforce the role of international institutions in supporting compliance, verification, and promoting peaceful uses, and cooperation.

At the same time, we are clearly aware of the challenges facing the process.

The regional security context remains extremely fragile. Divisions persist and trust has dwindled. The full participation of all States of the region - which is essential for the effectiveness and durability of any future Middle East zone - has yet to be achieved.

These challenges must be addressed, for the common security of all States in the region, through dialogue and diplomacy, with dedication and hard work.

Indeed, the value of this Conference process lies precisely in its ability to preserve a diplomatic space where dialogue can continue, where both political and technical issues can be discussed, and where a longer-term vision of cooperative security can gradually take shape. In a region marked by deep tensions and recurrent crises, that is, in itself, meaningful.

The path towards a legally binding treaty establishing such a zone will undoubtedly be complex. The scope of the proposed zone - encompassing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery - makes this an ambitious undertaking. It demands political wisdom, courage, and sustained diplomatic investment.

My Office will continue to assist participating States in advancing this important process. We will continue to support dialogue, facilitate engagement, and provide substantive and organizational assistance, as required by GA decision 73/546.

Wider and robust support by the international community will also be essential to further advancing the process. And this timely event led by the Presidency of Oman is one of the initiatives to provide transparency and broaden understanding of the process and to garner stronger support by all Member States, inter-governmental organizations and civil society. The NPT Review Conference, and the 1995 resolution on the Middle East provide a very pertinent context for this event. I hope today's discussion, along with deliberations at the Review Conference will contribute to continuous progress towards achieving the establishment of the Middle East zone.

I thank Oman for its outstanding leadership, and I encourage all those participating in this process to continue their constructive engagement. Rest assured that the United Nations remains fully committed to supporting this process.

I wish you a productive discussion, and thank you very much for your attention.

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