



**Opening Remarks at Side Event organized by Brazil, the United Kingdom
and UNODA**

**“A new Comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones
in all its aspects: a contribution to the NPT”**

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As delivered



6 May 2026
New York, NY

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to this side event on a new comprehensive study of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects: a contribution to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Today's discussion provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the work undertaken thus far by the Qualified Group of Experts, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/241. This event also helps promote transparency, foster exchange among States, and underscore the continued relevance of nuclear-weapon-free zones to the implementation of the NPT, as well as to regional and international peace and security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to underline the importance of this mandate and the task given to the Group.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones have long been vital building blocks of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Emerging from distinct regional concerns, they have endured through difficult periods and contributed meaningfully to post-Cold War disarmament gains.

The first comprehensive study was undertaken in the 1970s, when only one nuclear-weapon-free zone existed. Since that time new zones have been established, and the broader landscape of

nuclear-weapon-free arrangements has evolved considerably. Yet the experience of these zones has not been revisited in a similarly comprehensive way. This new study therefore offers an important and long overdue opportunity to take fresh stock of their contribution and to consider what is required for them to remain effective in today's complex and fluid security environment – at a time when such initiatives are needed more than ever.

As we all know, the risk of nuclear weapon use – whether deliberate, by mistake, or through miscalculation – is unacceptably high. At the moment one false step could lead to catastrophic consequences.

At the same time, the present context has renewed interest in preserving and strengthening existing zones and in creating new ones, as bulwarks against the threat of regional proliferation and nuclear weapon use. These zones remain practical and proven instruments for advancing disarmament and non-proliferation objectives, while also contributing to confidence-building and regional stability.

Non-nuclear-weapon States have increasingly underlined the importance they attach to negative security assurances, including in the context of the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. Parties to those treaties continue to call for strengthened assurances through the accelerated ratification and implementation of the relevant protocols by the nuclear-weapon States, as well as for continued dialogue on the reservations attached to them.

These discussions also extend beyond treaty-based zones. Mongolia's internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free status offers an important example of how such arrangements can also advance security and non-proliferation objectives in different contexts.

Finally, and as reflected in the 1995 Middle East resolution, a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction remains a priority. In light of the devastating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the wider risks of regional escalation, the urgency of this objective is only more apparent.

I hope today's discussion will help advance dialogue, strengthen understanding, and support the important work ahead.

I thank you very much for your attention.
