



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
27 April 2023

Original: English

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## Seventy-eighth session

Item 105 of the preliminary list\*

### The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

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

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly decision 73/546, in which the Assembly requested 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, the third session was held from 14 to 18 November 2022 at United Nations Headquarters. In its decision, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report annually on developments in that regard. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. Pursuant to decision 73/546, the Secretary-General sent notes verbales to all Members to the Conference,<sup>1</sup> inviting them to participate at the third session of the Conference. Invitations were also sent to the three co-sponsors of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,<sup>2</sup> the other two nuclear-weapon States<sup>3</sup> and the relevant international organizations<sup>4</sup> to attend the third session as observers.

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\* [A/78/50](#).

<sup>1</sup> Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen (see the report of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East (GOV/2018/38-GC(62)/6)).

<sup>2</sup> Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

<sup>3</sup> China and France.

<sup>4</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency, Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit.



3. The President-designate of the third session of the Conference, the Chargé d'affaires and Deputy Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations, Jeanne Mrad, convened several informal consultations to discuss various issues related to the preparations for the Conference, including both substantive and organizational matters, such as the agenda, the programme of work and the work of the working committee.

## **II. Conference proceedings and outcomes**

4. The third session of the Conference was opened on 14 November 2022 by Tareq Albanai (Kuwait) on behalf of the presidency of the second session of the Conference. In accordance with the decision taken at the first session on the Conference's rotating presidency ([A/CONF.236/DEC.4](#)), the Conference endorsed by acclamation Lebanon as President of the third session of the Conference and invited Jeanne Mrad (Lebanon) to preside over the Conference. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs made a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General at the opening of the session. Relevant international organizations, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations were invited to attend the public meetings of the third session as observers ([A/CONF.236/2022/DEC.1](#) and [A/CONF.236/2022/DEC.2](#)).

5. In the general debate that followed the opening meeting, participating States, observer States and international organizations made statements. During the ensuing thematic debate, representatives of participating and observer States, as well as the relevant international organizations, exchanged views on the following topics: (a) core obligations of a future Middle East zone treaty; (b) issues identified in paragraph 51 of the report on the second session of the Conference; (c) glossary of terminologies; and (d) other related issues (see [A/CONF.236/2022/3](#)).

6. During the thematic debate, participating States, observer States and relevant international organizations exchanged views on a number of issues related to the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in accordance with General Assembly decision 73/546. The final report adopted by the Conference (*ibid.*) contains a summary of the deliberations held during the thematic debate.

7. In order to continue substantive deliberations in the next intersessional period in 2023, the participating States agreed on the following topics for consideration by the working committee: (a) glossary of terminologies; and (b) general principles and obligations for a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In accordance with the decision to establish the working committee ([A/CONF.236/2021/DEC.3](#)), the committee may decide to report on its work to the Conference at its subsequent annual session.

8. In line with the decision of the Conference at its first session ([A/CONF.236/DEC.3](#)), the Conference decided that its fourth session would be held from 13 to 17 November 2023 at United Nations Headquarters.

## **III. Observations**

9. The Secretary-General welcomes the efforts made by the President and participating States of the Conference to maintain the momentum and to advance this process, through constructive engagement, towards the long-sought goal of establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The Secretary-General recognizes that progress towards achieving such a zone in the Middle East will enhance regional and international peace and security.

10. The working committee established at the second session of the Conference provided an important standing mechanism for participating States to continue to address substantive issues related to the Middle East zone during the intersessional periods between the annual sessions of the Conference. During 2022, the committee held two substantive meetings to discuss several topics related to the future zone treaty with the participation and input of regional and international experts, including legal aspects of the future Middle East zone treaty and verification in relation to nuclear weapons.

11. The Secretary-General believes that this conference process represents a meaningful framework and a valuable opportunity for States in the Middle East and other stakeholders to engage in dialogue and build confidence in a joint effort to address all the issues of concern with regard to establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the region. The Secretary-General commends the constructive approach adopted by the participating States to engage in dialogue in the process in an open and inclusive manner, encourages all States in the Middle East to participate in and contribute to the process and continues to encourage the international community, including civil society, to support the process.

12. The Secretary-General is fully committed to fulfilling the mandate entrusted to him in General Assembly decision 73/546 and reaffirms that the realization of such a zone in the Middle East would be of significant value to international disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and to regional and international peace and security.

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