

Annual NATO Conference on WMD Arms Control,
Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation

“2012 Conference on the Establishment of Zone
Free of Nuclear Weapons and all Other Weapons
of Mass Destruction: the Way Forward”

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Introduction

I would like to thank you for inviting me today to this beautiful city of Budapest to speak in my personal and academic capacity to reflect some of my views on how to move forward with the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. I believe that the topic of nuclear weapon free zones is of utmost importance given the transformative changes underway in the political landscape of the region. In my presentation, I intend to discuss three main issues: first, I will discuss the current situation as it is now, second, I will reflect some views on how we should establish a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East, and third, provide some concluding remarks.

I. The Current Situation

1. The “Arab Spring” has without a doubt changed existing fundamental dynamics and has had significant implications on the political and security settings in the Middle East. Public opinion is already playing a much more significant and prominent role in Arab societies and in this respect, will have a fundamental role in the formulation of disarmament and security issues. Arab governments are becoming more accountable to their people and foreign policy is becoming more in line with domestic aspirations and a reflection of popular demands. Parliaments, with their foreign affairs, Arab affairs and National Security committees, are expected to play an increasing role in foreign policy issues in Egypt, in which nuclear issues will receive, without a doubt, considerable attention.
2. It is in this context, that the establishment of a zone can positively contribute to regional and international non-proliferation and disarmament efforts as well as improving the overall security environment in the Middle East. The convening of the conference in 2012 on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is integral to the future stability of the region. The success of the 2012 Conference will be crucial to the success of the current NPT Review Cycle

and its outcome will certainly have a significant bearing on future developments in the Middle East.

3. The Middle East remains a highly volatile region troubled with protracted conflicts. The acquisition by states of nuclear weapons, and WMD's at large, undoubtedly contributes to greater instability, aggravate tensions, and leads to an accelerated arms race in the region. It is imperative therefore, that the Middle East follows other regional examples and complete the implementation of existing regional nuclear weapon free zones and work actively to establish such a zone given the exceptional challenges this region brings to global stability.
4. In our attempts to provide a framework for a NWFZ in the Middle East, it would be beneficial then to reflect on the treaties of other regional nuclear weapon free zones such as the Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba, and Bangkok Treaties. Despite the contextual differences between these zones and the Middle East, these treaties nevertheless can provide us with guidance when it comes to formulating the technical, institutional, and scientific dimensions related to a weapon free zone.
5. The IAEA Forum on "Experience of Possible Relevance to the Creation of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East" held in Vienna by the IAEA November of last year was useful in this regard as well. Several constructive proposals, made at the Forum, could be taken into consideration such as taking stock of the importance of declaratory policy, in particular, declarations of good intentions, and identifying specific and practical confidence building measures.

II. The Way Forward: The Nuclear Weapon Free zone in the Middle East

1. It is imperative following the constructive report of the facilitator of the 2012 Conference at the first session of the PrepCom of the NPT, that he and his team intensify consultations with participating states in order to finalize the agenda, modalities and rules of procedure of the conference. Furthermore, there should soon be an announcement of the dates of the 2012 conference, in order to enable appropriate preparation by participating States, finalize the Conference's structure, and prepare the necessary background documentation

as stipulated by the NPT Action Plan, as well as the provision of the necessary financing, through the fund created by the host Government (Finland) and through operationalising the UN Trust Fund which has been the subject of discussions in the aftermath of the 2010 Review Conference. In order to reach the shared goal of a Zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, we must collectively ensure that the conference marks a successful start in the process leading the establishment of the free zone in the Middle East.

2. Now, following the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 Review Process of the Treaty, there is a need to enter directly into a phase of substantive and procedural preparation for the 2012 Conference itself, and thus there is a need to intensify consultations with participating States, which will require additional efforts from now until convening the Conference with a view to making it a success. Hence, there is a need to form a mechanism for substantive and procedural preparation for the 2012 Conference and follow-up of progress, through an ad hoc preparatory group composed of the United Nations Secretary General in his capacity as convener of the 2012 Conference, the three depositary States, the remaining nuclear-weapon States, as well as the participating regional states – all in full coordination with the distinguished facilitator Ambassador Laava and his team.
3. Good preparation of the substantive and procedural issues related to the convening of the 2012 Conference will contribute to its success and achieving its objectives, namely the implementation of the 1995 Middle East Resolution through an ongoing process as stipulated in the fourth action plan of the 2010 Final Document. This process should launch a sustained and serious process leading to the establishment of the Zone, and involving concrete steps and measures to be taken within specific time-frames, and linked to the successive sessions of the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 Review Process of the Treaty.

4. While important progress has been made, there is still need for intensified consultations in order to finalize the agenda, modalities, and the rules of procedure. There should be preparation for how the issues of verification and compliance should be addressed. What are the mechanisms? Which institutions will be entrusted with this responsibility? What are the implications for non compliance? Other issues such as the security guarantees in support of it, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and nuclear safety are issues which should be prepared as well.
5. The conference should cover the different properties of the Zone such as geographical area, prohibitions, entry into force, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Nuclear disarmament in the Middle East should also take place within the efforts made to implement the steps leading to nuclear disarmament as agreed in the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences.
6. In this respect, the free zone in the Middle East could contain the following technical provisions:
 - Dismantling and destroying existing or remaining nuclear weapons capabilities, facilities, and devices under international verification mechanisms.
 - Renouncing nuclear weapons through refraining from conducting indigenous development and activities related to nuclear weapons.
 - Prohibiting stationing of any nuclear explosive devices on the zone.
 - Prohibiting nuclear explosive testing in the zone.
 - Using nuclear materials and facilities for peaceful purposes only.
 - Placing all nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards.
 - Establishing the necessary relevant institutions and mechanisms/entities to uphold such a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and address the issue of verification to identify the role of the IAEA and other relevant organizations within such a zone.

(It is pertinent in this regard to draw the attention to a highly recommended book written by AL J. Venter titled "How South Africa Built Six Atom Bombs and then Abandoned its Nuclear Weapons Program" published by Ashanti Press).

7. The participation in the Middle East Conference should be inclusive. The conference should include Israel, Iran, and the members of the League of Arab States, as well as the nuclear weapon states and other relevant international organizations such as the IAEA, the OPCW, BTWC, CTBTO. The 2010 Action Plan also endorsed additional steps aimed at supporting the implementation of the 1995 Resolution, including that the relevant international organizations be requested to prepare background documentation for the 2012 Conference.
8. I believe that the 2012 Conference and the follow on steps should be inclusive to allow a more genuine, candid, and necessary interaction about nuclear disarmament, dismantlement, nuclear roll-back, transparency, accountability, and verification. There has not been an interaction for many years and all opportunities that exist to make this happen should be utilized.
9. Let me also stress here that the 2010 Action Plan recognized the important role played by civil society in contributing to implementation of the 1995 Resolution and encourages all efforts in this regard. Therefore, it is important to take into account the strong supportive positions of civil society throughout the Middle East and the world towards the implementation of the 1995 Resolution and the establishment of the Zone, as well as the ideas that civil society can contribute to that end. We need to encourage the participation of non-governmental organizations as they provide opportunities to present constructive ideas and initiatives that could be helpful in achieving global disarmament.

III. Conclusions

1. In conclusion, it is worth recalling that key successes in abolishing nuclear weapon programs included South Africa's historic decision to dismantle its nuclear weapons and join the nonproliferation treaty; decisions by Brazil and Argentina to roll back their nuclear programs and create a bilateral verification agency; and the decisions by Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine to transfer nuclear weapons back to Russia after they seceded from the Soviet Union. The actions by these states to give up nuclear programs and weapons deserve greater recognition and merit drawing lessons from.

2. Egypt has taken extra steps and exerted efforts within the framework of the League of Arab States towards the implementation of the 1995 Resolution and the 2010 fourth Action Plan, including through meetings of the Committee of Senior Officials from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Secretariat to prepare for the participation of all Arab States in the 2012 Conference.
3. In this regard, the Plan of Action of 2010 reaffirmed the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. There is an urgency and importance of achieving universality of the Treaty. We should continue to call on all States in the Middle East that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States so as to achieve its universality at an early date.
4. It is essential also for Iran and the IAEA to intensify their dialogue aiming at an urgent resolution of all outstanding substantive issues for the purpose of providing clarifications regarding the outstanding issues. We also urge Iran to comply fully with its obligations under relevant resolutions of the UN security council and to meet the requirements of the IAEA Board of Governors. We continue to support a diplomatic solution and respect the legitimate right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy consistent with the NPT.
5. It is imperative for all countries concerned to realize how dramatically the regional context has changed. This in turn, requires modifications in the behavior and approach of many. What was possible and acceptable before, may not necessarily be plausible or tolerable today. The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction can safeguard both regional and international peace and security at this critical moment.
6. It should be noted also that there is a special responsibility on the nuclear-weapon States, especially the Depositary States that co-sponsored the 1995 Resolution, to implement the Resolution. Moreover, the implementation of the 2010 fourth Action Plan is a collective responsibility. It is clear that the responsibility to implement the 2010 fourth Action Plan does not lie with the States of the Middle East alone, but rather all parties should exert

efforts towards succeeding in implementing the 1995 Resolution, and the Depositary States have a special responsibility in this regard by virtue of their special role in supporting the Treaty.

7. Before I conclude, let me just take this opportunity here to acknowledge NATO's growing Mediterranean Dialogue which contributes to regional security and stability as well as fosters mutual understanding between NATO countries and non NATO countries of the Mediterranean region. This dialogue has been important because it has had a notable dimension on the issues of disarmament and nonproliferation. Within this dialogue, consultative meetings among experts were held, training courses were organized, and officials have been invited to present their views and opinions. I take this opportunity to encourage NATO countries to utilize this necessary platform to support the 2012 Conference and encourage all states of the Middle East to participate in this significant conference.

We have an opportunity ahead of us now. Let's not miss it.

Thank You