



EU statement

Nuclear Weapons Free Zones

Thematic debate

Geneva, 31 January 2023

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The candidate countries Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ and the potential candidate country Georgia align themselves with this statement.

We welcome the focus of today's discussion on nuclear-weapon-free zones and appreciate your effort in this regard. We also thank UNIDIR for its presentation.

The 2016 European Union Global Strategy for the Union's Foreign and Security Policy as well as the 2003 European Union Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) are founded on the conviction that a multilateral approach to security, including disarmament and non-proliferation, provides the best way to maintain international order.

The EU acknowledges the critical importance of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones for peace and security and remains committed to the implementation of the Resolution on Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

We acknowledge the critical role the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Treaty of Rarotonga, Treaty of Bangkok, Treaty of Pelindaba, and the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia as well as other similar instruments play in maintaining international peace and security. The EU recognises that treaty-based security assurances are available to nuclear weapon free zones and encourages nuclear weapon States to sign and ratify the relevant protocols of the Treaties establishing nuclear weapon free zones drawn up following the requisite consultations. We also call on those States in existing nuclear weapon free zones that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the relevant nuclear weapon free zone Treaties. Regional nuclear-weapon-free zones

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

help strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and consolidate international efforts towards peace and security and achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. They significantly contribute to the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which has laid the foundation for establishing nuclear-weapons-free zones around the world as well as the establishment of a Middle East Weapons-of-Mass-Destruction-Free Zone (ME WMDFZ).

Mr. President,

It remains a strategic priority of the EU to support peace and stability in the entire Middle East. The EU reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems, as agreed by NPT States Parties. The EU recalls that, as stated in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan, such zones can only be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at between all States of the region concerned. The EU maintains the view that dialogue and building confidence among stakeholders is the only sustainable way to agree on arrangements for a meaningful conference, to be attended by all States of the Middle East.

The EU continues to call on all States in the region, which have not yet done so, to accede to and abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and to conclude a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, the Additional Protocol and, as applicable, a modified Small Quantities Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also encourage subscription to The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles Proliferation (HCoC) that could contribute to regional confidence building, which is necessary for progress towards a Middle East WMD free zone.

The EU notes the convening of the UN Conferences on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and it is encouraged by its outcome. The EU calls on all Parties to further their efforts to build an inclusive and consensus-based process, including all States of the region, taking into account the security concerns of all States and covering all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, in line with the 1995 NPT resolution on the Middle East and the 2010 NPT Review Conference Outcome. The EU reaffirms its readiness to assist the process leading to the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other WMD and their delivery systems, as it has done in the past by facilitating dialogue among States of the region.

The EU also confirms its readiness to continue its assistance to the Middle East region, via "The European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centers of Excellence Initiative" (CBRN CoE), launched in response to the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of countries outside the European Union to mitigate CBRN risks. The Centers of Excellence established in Jordan, Algeria, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates all contribute to enhanced capacity building in the region and cooperation between these States.

Mr. President,

The EU has adopted specific legislative acts to support UN works in this regard. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/574 currently supports the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, where assistance requests from States to take additional, practical steps to implement the obligations of UNSCR 1540 (2004) at national level, give priority to States from, inter alia, the Gulf and Middle East region. Furthermore, the EU also adopted Decision (CFSP) 2019/938 of 6 June 2019, specifically in support of a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other WMD and their delivery systems. It allows to bring the process forward by organising seminars, workshops and meetings in order to enhance confidence building. The aim is to build a deeper collective understanding of the successes and failures related to previous work, which would eventually allow for emergence of ideas and proposals on new avenues leading to the establishment of such a zone.

To further assist the process and help produce a conducive atmosphere, the EU has provided significant funding to the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on a process of confidence building concerning this zone. An EU side event in the margins of the NPT Review Conference highlighted the achievements of this UNIDIR project and next steps.

I thank you, Mr. President.