

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY DIRECTORATE

Disarmament, Non-Proliferation
and Arms Export Control Division

EU joint reply to UNGA Resolution 79/16:

"Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East"

28 May 2025

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 most effective means of maintaining international order.

The Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean of 13 July 2008, establishing the Union for the Mediterranean, reaffirmed the common aspiration to achieve peace as well as regional security as set out in the Barcelona Declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of 27-28 November 1995. The Barcelona Declaration promotes regional security through, inter alia, nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation, adherence to regional arrangements such as zones free of nuclear weapons, including their verification regimes, as well as by fulfilling in good faith the commitments of the signatories to the Barcelona Declaration under arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation conventions.

The parties to the Union for the Mediterranean agreed to pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of WMD and their delivery systems and to consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive accumulation of conventional arms.

The EU reiterates its full support for the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which has laid the foundation for establishing nuclear-free zones around the world as well as the establishment of a Middle East Weapons-of-Mass-Destruction-Free Zone (ME WMDFFZ).

The EU remains committed to the implementation of the Resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference. The EU strongly supports the outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the Middle East and reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other WMD and their delivery systems in the Middle East, as agreed by NPT States Parties. The 2010 Action Plan provides the most promising foundation for moving forward.

The EU believes that the establishment of such zones, as outlined in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan, can only occur through voluntary arrangements agreed upon by all States in the region. The EU maintains that dialogue and building confidence among stakeholders is the only sustainable approach to agree on arrangements for a meaningful conference. The conference should involve all states in the Middle East, based on arrangements

freely agreed upon, as decided by the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Inclusivity is vital for effectiveness, as proposals that impose solutions risk failure. The EU calls on all States in the region to engage fully and completely with this process, in order to agree upon suitable arrangements and to ensure progress in the conference, in light of the urgent priority and internationally agreed obligations to establish a ME WMDFZ.

The EU has consistently conveyed this position at the UN, as was also the case in recent UN discussions related to concrete proposals on how to take the process forward. The EU reiterates its support for the UN Pact for the Future. This includes “the pursuit of nuclear-weapon-free zones to enhance international peace and security and the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world”. The EU takes note of the five Conferences on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. The EU calls on all parties to further their efforts to build an inclusive and consensus based process, including all States of the region. The EU emphasises the importance of addressing the security concerns of all these States, encompassing all WMD and their delivery systems, in accordance with the 1995 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 WMD free zone in the Middle East, as it has done in the past by facilitating dialogue among States of the region. Several specific legislative acts, so-called EU Council Decisions, have been adopted at the EU to support the UN’s work in this regard. The following Council Decisions supporting various projects and activities supporting the process are ongoing:

- Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/654 of 20 March 2023, implemented by UNODA, is a continuation of EU support to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, where based on requests from States the aim is to raise awareness, enhance national legislative frameworks and enforcement measures, and provide tailored assistance in capacity building.
- The EU renewed its support to the process in 2023 to advance the Union’s commitment to establishing a Middle East WMDFZ. The Council adopted on 26 June 2023 Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/1306 in support of a project on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East (ME WMDFZ) in an evolving regional security environment. The Decision supports a 3-year project implemented by UNIDIR. The objectives are:
 - assisting in mitigating regional WMD proliferation trends;
 - encouraging regional security arrangements and arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament norms and processes;
 - developing a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the ME WMDFZ and current regional and international developments; and
 - promoting an effective, verifiable, inclusive, and sustainable ME WMDFZ
- Council Decisions (CFSP) 2021/2073 of 25 November 2021, 2023/1344 of 26 June 2023 and 2024/1984 of 15 July 2024, supports key activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), including the universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), non-routine missions and investigative capacities and its operational effectiveness through satellite imagery.

The EU reaffirms its readiness to continue to assist the Middle East region, via "The European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centers of Excellence Initiative" (CBRN CoE). The CBRN CoE network brings together experts and professionals

from 63 countries that cooperate at regional and international level to strengthen CBRN risk mitigation and to promote a global culture of safety and security. The established Centers of Excellence with regional secretariats, including in Jordan, Algeria, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates actively contribute to capacity building in the region.

Furthermore, the EU continues to call on all States in the region, which have not yet done so, to accede to and abide by the NPT, the CWC, to sign and ratify the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and 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). Subscribing to The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles Proliferation (HCoC) could also contribute to regional confidence building, which is necessary for progress towards a ME WMDFZ.