

Blue Banner wholeheartedly supports UNGA resolution 79/241 as timely since the first such study was undertaken four decades ago. Much has changed since in international relations and technology development. Therefore this study would be useful in strengthening the current 5 zones as well as establishing second generation zones in troubled regions or where interests of nuclear weapon states are involved.

The resolution has specifically mentioned the scope of the study which needs to be broadened to make the NWFZ regime *inclusive* by reviewing the definition and the regime's very concept. The reason is that establishing NWFZs "on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" leaves out at least two dozen states, if not more, that due to their geographical location or for credible political or legal reasons cannot form part of the current regime. This innovative approach would only complement the current traditional group-state zones.

Cumulatively in their number and territory/space they cover these individual states far exceed some current zones. Inclusivity would prevent discrimination among non-nuclear-weapon states or violation of UN Charter's principle of sovereign equality of states and inherent right to self-defense. It would also proscribe creation of blind spots and grey areas as the Achilles' heel of the NWFZ and NPT regimes.

Nearly 70% of the Earth's surface are seas and oceans where the arms race is alarmingly increasing. Many of the individual states are small island states, including in the vast Pacific region. As per United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea these states are in fact large ocean states with enormous exclusive economic zones (EEZs) with rich living and non-living resources. Some of them are located on or near strategic trade and military sea lanes. Hence today geopolitical and geo-economic importance of such areas is on the rise. No wonder great power rivalry in this area is increasing. However this rivalry can be turned into a constructive cooperation to benefit all states if individual states are brought under the strengthened NWFZ umbrella and expand horizontally the area of the regime. This would also reduce the risks of conflicts and frictions by proxy conflicts as per logic *lupus non mordet lupum* (wolf does not bite a wolf).

The content of such individual cases can be agreed upon by these states by adoption of national declarations or legislations and provision by the nuclear weapons states of appropriate assurances.

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