

# EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY DIRECTORATE

Disarmament, Non-Proliferation  
and Arms Export Control Division

## **EU joint reply to UNGA Resolution 77/38: "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East" 31 May 2023**

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 WMDFZ).

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 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 Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament 'Securing our Common Future', presented on 24 May 2018, which pledges to work with UN Member States to strengthen and consolidate nuclear-weapon-free zone. This includes supporting the further establishment of such zones, including in the Middle East. The EU takes note of the 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, held in 2019, 2021 and 2022 in New York and is encouraged by their outcomes. 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 still ongoing:

- Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/574 of 7 April 2022 extended the application of Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/809, implemented by UNODA, which 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 UNCSR 1540 (2004) at national level, gives priority to States from, inter alia, the Gulf and Middle East region.
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/753 of 16 May 2022 in support of a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. This Council Decision, implemented by UNIDIR, supports EU efforts to bring the process forward, as the EU also did in 2011 and in 2012 respectively. The Council Decision aims to enhance confidence building through a number of seminars, work-shops and research projects, whose objective it is to reach a deeper collective understanding of the successes and failures related to previous efforts, and which would eventually allow for ideas on new avenues and proposals leading to a WMD free zone in the Middle East.
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/573 of 7 April 2022 supports key activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), including the universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the implementation of the Decision of the 4th Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC on addressing the threat from chemical weapons use (C-SS4/DEC.3) adopted on 27 June 2018.

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). This initiative was launched in response to enhance the institutional capacity of countries outside the European Union to mitigate CBRN risks. The established Centers of Excellence 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 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). 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.