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Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

Fifth session

New York, 18–22 November 2024

Report of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the work of its fifth session

I. Introduction

1. In its decision 73/546, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to convene annual sessions of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction for a duration of one week at Headquarters until the conference concluded the elaboration of a legally binding treaty establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

II. Organizational matters and proceedings

1. Opening and duration of the session

2. The fifth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction was held from 18 to 22 November 2024 at United Nations Headquarters. A total of 22 Members to the Conference, four observer States (China, France, Russian Federation and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and three relevant international organizations or entities (International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit) participated in the session. The list of participants is contained in document [A/CONF.236/2024/INF/3](#).

3. The Conference was opened on 18 November 2024 by the President of the fourth session of the Conference, the Permanent Representative of Libya to the United Nations, Taher El-Sonni. In accordance with rule 5 (1) of the rules of procedure of the Conference, as contained in document [A/CONF.236/2023/1](#), Members to the Conference endorsed by acclamation Mauritania as President of the fifth session and



invited the Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations, Sidi Mohamed Laghdaf, to preside over the Conference. The Secretary-General addressed the opening session of the Conference by video message. The President of the General Assembly delivered a statement to the Conference. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs attended the opening session.

2. Agenda and programme of work

4. At its 1st meeting, the Conference adopted the agenda for the fifth session, as contained in document [A/CONF.236/2024/1](#), as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Endorsement of the President of the fifth session.
3. Address by the President of the fifth session.
4. Address by the Secretary-General.
5. Address by the President of the General Assembly.
6. Adoption of the agenda.
7. Adoption of the programme of work.
8. Credentials of representatives.
9. General debate.
10. Work of the working committee.
11. Thematic debate.
12. Consideration and adoption of the report.
13. Endorsement of the President of the sixth session.
14. Any other business.
15. Closure of the session.

5. At the same meeting, the Conference adopted the programme of work for the session ([A/CONF.236/2024/2](#)). The Conference also agreed to structure the thematic debate on the basis of a list of topics proposed by the President of the fifth session and agreed by Members to the Conference.

3. Attendance of relevant international organizations, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations

6. At its 1st meeting, the Conference decided to invite a number of intergovernmental organizations, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations to attend public meetings of the fifth session as observers (see [A/CONF.236/2024/DEC.1](#) and [A/CONF.236/2024/DEC.2](#)).

4. Documentation

7. The documentation of the Conference is available on the website of the Conference (<https://meetings.unoda.org/me-nwmdfz/conference-on-the-establishment-of-a-middle-east-zone-free-of-nuclear-weapons-and-other-weapons-of-mass-destruction-fifth-session-2024>).

III. Credentials

8. The credentials of representatives and the names of alternate representatives and advisers, to be issued either by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, were submitted to the Secretary-General of the Conference, who, having examined the credentials received, noted that:

(a) Formal credentials in due form had been received for the representatives of the following Members to the Conference: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and United Arab Emirates;

(b) Provisional credentials for the representatives of the following Members to the Conference had been communicated by means of email, the e-deleGATE portal, a note verbale or a letter from the permanent missions in New York: Algeria, Djibouti, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen;

(c) Credentials or other information concerning their representatives had not been received from the following Members to the Conference: Comoros, Israel and Somalia.

9. On the proposal of the Secretary-General of the Conference, the Conference agreed to accept the credentials of all the States referred to in paragraph 8 (a) and (b) above, on the understanding that the originals of the credentials of the representatives of those States referred to in paragraph 8 (b), as well as those of the representatives of those States referred to in paragraph 8 (c), where applicable, would be submitted as soon as possible.

IV. General debate

10. The Conference commenced the general debate at its 1st meeting and continued the general debate at its 2nd meeting. At its 1st meeting, the Conference heard statements by Qatar, on behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, the State of Palestine, Morocco, the Sudan, Tunisia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Algeria, Iraq and China.

11. At its 2nd meeting, the Conference heard statements by the representatives of the United Arab Emirates, Mauritania, Lebanon, Djibouti, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Russian Federation, France, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, IAEA, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (on behalf of the Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention) and the League of Arab States.

12. The right of reply was exercised by the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran at the end of the 2nd meeting.

13. Statements by Members to the Conference at the general debate covered a diverse set of issues, such as emphasizing the importance and validity of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as other relevant outcomes until their objectives are fully achieved; expressing regret over the consecutive failures of the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held in 2015 and 2022; stressing the need to ensure the participation of all parties and invited observers, and the obstruction to the work of the Conference caused by their absence; the general

principles and obligations under the future treaty; the inalienable right of States parties to receive and use nuclear, chemical and biological technology and materials for peaceful purposes; the work of the working committee, including the index of the list of topics; the need to follow up on and review past thematic discussions, including nuclear verification and peaceful uses and technical cooperation; the regional meeting in Doha; as well as reflections and thoughts on previous and future sessions of the Conference and its working committee.

14. Members to the Conference welcomed the significant progress achieved by the Conference since its inception, acknowledged with satisfaction the substantive procedural achievements of the Conference, and commended its resolute approach to its work and objective of ridding the region of the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

15. Members to the Conference condemned the ongoing war on Gaza and Lebanon by Israel since October 2023 and its ground invasion of Lebanon starting on 1 October 2024, respectively, in flagrant breach of the sovereignty of Lebanon, and expressed grave concern over the unprecedented toll of the Israeli wars on civilian lives and civilian infrastructure that has resulted in catastrophic humanitarian crises. They called upon Israel to abide by the principles and its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions, and to immediately cease its aggressions in the region. Members to the Conference renewed their demand for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid.

16. Members to the Conference expressed condemnation of the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. They articulated profound concerns and condemnation regarding the nuclear threats made by high-ranking Israeli officials. This included the statement by the Minister of Heritage of Israel on 5 November 2023, threatening to use nuclear weapons on Gaza, as well as the nuclear threat made by the Prime Minister of Israel against Iran in September 2023. The participating Members unequivocally condemned the irresponsible statements, deplored the severe risk that they posed to regional and international peace and security, and called for the United Nations and the Security Council to take action to ensure accountability for the threats. Members to the Conference underscored that the irresponsible nuclear threats clearly demonstrated the urgent and indispensable need to establish a Middle East zone that was free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

17. Members to the Conference emphasized that the refusal by Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon party, engage in the work of the Conference and subject all its nuclear facilities and activities to a comprehensive safeguards agreement with IAEA represented a significant challenge to their collective efforts and threatened regional and international peace and security. The refusal undermined the credibility of the non-proliferation regime and imposed additional burdens on regional States that were taking concrete and credible steps to promote peace and security. Members to the Conference called upon Israel to join without delay the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon party and to expeditiously subject all its nuclear facilities and activities to a comprehensive safeguards agreement with IAEA, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

18. Members to the Conference stressed that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was a shared international responsibility that must be supported and operationalized in accordance with United Nations resolutions, in

particular Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991), both adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. In that connection, Members to the Conference called for the urgent implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and reaffirmed that the Conference was not a replacement for that resolution.

19. Some Members to the Conference underscored the rising complexities of global security conditions and said that confidence-building and nuclear risk reduction efforts were not an alternative to effective, complete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament measures and must not be a pretext for delaying the initiation of such measures, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Nuclear disarmament must be undertaken transparently and sustainably under international control and verification and in accordance with a specific and measurable timetable. The enormous financial costs and human capacity dedicated to the development of those inhumane weapons should be redirected towards sustainable development. Concerns were expressed regarding the unprecedented and alarming nuclear arms race, the decades-long failure of nuclear-weapon States to meet their disarmament obligations and commitments, the renewal and modernization of nuclear arsenals by nuclear-weapon States and their engaging in nuclear sharing arrangements that directly contradicted their non-proliferation obligations.

20. A speaker expressed serious concern over the distortion of the original balance of the pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in favour of the disproportionate prioritization of the non-proliferation pillar while simultaneously neglecting the pillars of peaceful use and disarmament and the use of that distortion by certain States to employ misguided policies and actions, including unilateral coercive measures, that had unlawfully prejudiced the legitimate legal interests of non-nuclear weapon States. The same speaker underscored that, by politicizing the initiative of establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and refusing to participate in the Conference, Israel sought to conceal the true reason behind its opposition to the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, which was to retain its own weapons of mass destruction programmes by remaining free of any legally binding commitments.

V. Work of the working committee

21. At the 3rd meeting, the President of the fourth session and Permanent Representative of Libya to the United Nations, Taher El-Sonni, presented his summary of the work of the working committee in 2024 as an informal document (see the annex to the present report).

22. As requested by the Conference at its fourth session, the summary included an indicative, non-exhaustive, evolving and subject to further review index of the list of possible thematic topics that could be addressed by future sessions of the Conference.

23. Members to the Conference expressed appreciation to Libya for its leadership in conducting the work of the working committee during the intersessional period and decided to include the President's summary, as well as the index of the list of possible thematic topics, in the annex to the present report.

VI. Thematic debate

24. At its 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th meetings, the Conference held a thematic debate. Members to the Conference exchanged views on the following topics: (a) reflection and thoughts on previous and future sessions of the Conference and its working committee; and (b) continuation of the discussion on the topics from the fourth session and its working committee, namely nuclear verification and peaceful uses and technical cooperation.

25. The thematic debate was organized on the basis of agreed topics proposed by the President, with topics being addressed on a rolling basis. The deliberations proceeded with the understanding that any Members to the Conference could raise any additional topics for the thematic debate and could also supplement or consolidate their views on those issues at any time. Members to the Conference expressed their respective positions on the thematic topics, put forward proposals and engaged in interactive discussions.

26. Members to the Conference recalled the outcomes of the previous sessions of the Conference.

Reflection and thoughts on previous and future sessions of the Conference and its working committee

27. Members to the Conference expressed their appreciation to the Secretary-General, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Office for Disarmament Affairs (secretariat of the Conference) and the successive Presidents of the General Assembly for the continued and reliable support for the work of the Conference and encouraged increased financial and technical resources to be made available to the Conference and its activities.

28. Members to the Conference also expressed their appreciation to the observer States and international organizations that have consistently participated in and supported the work of the Conference.

29. Members to the Conference expressed their appreciation to Qatar for having organized an informal regional meeting in Doha on 4 and 5 June 2024 on perspectives on the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held on the margins of Third Arab Forum on Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, which allowed for open and in-depth discussions on the Conference process, including stocktaking, with the participation of senior representatives from New York and capital cities.

30. Members to the Conference acknowledged the progress and achievements made by the Conference and its working committee both procedurally and substantively, which had resulted in a robust, sustainable and credible process that delivered incremental, steady, systematic and meaningful progress towards the elaboration of a draft legal binding instrument establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, freely arrived at by the countries of the region despite the complexity of its mandate.

31. Members to the Conference expressed their commitment to further deepening and enriching the discussions, addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities, as well as to preserving the character of the Conference as an open, inclusive, non-selective and constructive forum of its Members, and they recalled the provisions of General Assembly decision 73/546, including the responsibility of the three co-sponsors of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

32. Members to the Conference identified as a key challenge the continued absence of Israel from the sessions. They noted with regret that the United States of America was the only invited observer State that had not yet attended. To address that challenge, Members to the Conference request successive Presidents, in accordance with the authority conferred on them, or through their designees, to undertake the following:

(a) To convene meetings with the Secretary-General of the United Nations to provide updates on recent Conference developments and encourage their continued support, including efforts in support of the full and active participation of the absent Member and observer in the Conference;

(b) To report periodically to the Conference on their efforts.

33. Members to the Conference invited the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports on the annual sessions of the Conference the efforts mentioned in paragraph 32 (a).

34. Several delegations recalled the conclusions of the meeting of the Senior Officials Committee of the League of Arab States held in Cairo in January 2024, which included the formation of an open-ended contact group tasked with communicating with the absent Member to the Conference and observer States.

35. To strengthen the work of the Conference, incoming Presidents of the Conference may ask, when deemed necessary, the advice of the most recent five former Presidents of the Conference in order to provide support to incoming Presidents through the benefit of institutional memory.

36. A proposal was made that the successive Presidents of the Conference may deliver agreed statements and/or engage on behalf of the Members to the Conference in relevant meetings and conferences, such as of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission, to provide updates on the recent developments in the work of Conference, and request the reflection of matters of interest agreed upon by the Members to the Conference in the outcome documents of the review conferences and preparatory commissions.

37. Members to the Conference welcomed the initiative announced by Mauritania, in its national capacity, to create a United Nations group of friends of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction as a platform to promote the goals of the Conference and secure the support of the wider membership of the United Nations.

38. With a view to strengthening the work of the Conference, a proposal was made to discuss an agreed sequencing of topics to be discussed by the successive sessions of the Conference under each of the categories of weapons of mass destruction. The Conference can rely on the index of the list of topics as a resource for future thematic debates, with a view to promoting predictability and progress, without prejudice to topics that will be proposed by the President of the Conference.

39. The view was expressed that the reports of the working committee should be accorded the same significance as the final reports of each session of the Conference. It was emphasized that such a practice would enhance the institutional memory of the Conference and contribute to enhancing the depth and continuity of substantive discussions. A delegation recalled that the working committee was established on an informal basis in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference.

40. Members to the Conference underlined their intention to continue to identify and document areas of convergence in the outcomes of the Conference and the working committee, which served as building blocks for continued discussion and

further consensus, including on areas of divergence, without prejudice to the positions of the Members to the Conference at a later stage. The view was also expressed that such documentation could serve as *travaux préparatoires* to aid in clarifying the intentions and rationale of treaty texts elaborated in the future.

41. The relevance and usefulness of non-papers and guiding questions submitted under the responsibility of the President of the Conference was considered as a supporting factor for focused and continued discussions in the Conference and the working committee.

42. Members to the Conference underscored the added value of further enhancing the visibility of the Conference by its successive Presidents during and on the sidelines of major relevant international meetings, engagement with regional and political groups at the United Nations and, as appropriate, substantive press releases that are based on the agreed outcomes of the Conference.

43. A proposal was made on the establishment of a sponsorship programme, as well as encouraging any other voluntary contributions aimed at promoting the participation in the work of the Conference and its working committee of experts from capital cities and relevant sectors of participating States.

44. Members to the Conference recognized the positive contribution of regional events to furthering the deliberation and objectives of the Conference. Several delegations expressed that such events could include activities on their margins, involving representatives from regional civil society organizations, academics or other relevant stakeholders. Other views were expressed that, given the sensitive nature of the Conference's work, which pertain to the national security of Member States, the Conference should maintain its intergovernmental structure.

45. With regard to the substantive discussions of the Conference, the view was expressed that the elaboration of common understandings on obligations, prohibitions and the general framework of the treaty should be prioritized. Another view was expressed that obligations, prohibitions and the general framework of the treaty should be taken into account at all thematic discussions.

46. The view was expressed that the treaty establishing a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was a non-proliferation treaty and that the working committee of the Conference should discuss, together with technical experts from IAEA and States with experience in the matter, the question of a mechanism for the monitoring of the complete, effective and irreversible disarmament of nuclear weapons in the zone before the treaty entered into force. A view was expressed concerning the scope of nuclear verification under the future treaty, and it was agreed that the issue required further consideration.

47. A proposal was made that, pending an agreement on obligations and prohibitions within the framework of the future treaty establishing the zone, and subjecting all related facilities to comprehensive IAEA safeguards, the Conference should explore the option to establish a mechanism for regional cooperation and the exchange of materiel, technology and knowledge on peaceful nuclear applications. Another proposal was made on the creation of a consortium fuel production in the region. The view was expressed that such an exploration would be premature at that stage and should take into consideration the balance between rights and obligations when the zone was established and provide its anticipated instrumental contribution to confidence building and new or enhanced forms of cooperation.

48. A proposal was made that the scope of discussions in the Conference and its working committee continue to be focused on nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

49. Many Members to the Conference supported engagement with secretariats and States Members of the United Nations from regional nuclear-weapon-free zones, both within the Conference or other forums organized by secretariats from nuclear-weapon-free zones and States Members of the United Nations. In that connection, Members to the Conference supported the proposal to provide input to the comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects, for example by officially transmitting outcomes of the Conference and those of the working committee to the group of experts undertaking the study.

50. The issue of unilateral coercive measures was raised. Various views remained the same as those expressed at the third session, and the positions expressed by Members to the Conference on the topic at that session remained valid ([A/CONF.236/2022/3](#), para. 31).

51. With regard to outreach and external engagement, a proposal was made that the Members to the Conference and its Presidents engage with civil society and other relevant stakeholders, in particular those from the Middle East region, including through informal dialogues on the sidelines of the annual sessions, as well as through virtual meetings. Some views were expressed that, given the sensitive nature of the Conference's work, which pertains to the national security of Members to the Conference, the Conference should maintain its intergovernmental structure.

52. A proposal was made that, given the proven effectiveness of both the Conference and its working committee, the Conference should avoid creating any new structures at that stage. Other speakers emphasized that, in line with rule 30 of the Conference's rules of procedure, the Conference could establish any committee that it deemed necessary for the performance of its functions and that committees should be open to all Members to the Conference.

Continuation of the discussion on the topics from the fourth session and its working committee, namely nuclear verification and peaceful uses and technical cooperation

53. Members to the Conference reaffirmed their inalienable right to peaceful uses in nuclear, biological and chemical materials and technology without discrimination, and emphasized that the future treaty should ensure that its Members could fully enjoy that right within their respective legal obligations and without any restrictions or obstacles, or politicization.

54. Several Members to the Conference recognized the role of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements in enhancing trust and transparency in the continued peaceful nature of nuclear programmes, as the universal standard for verification of peaceful uses.

55. The view was expressed that the IAEA additional protocol was a critical measure to strengthen the safeguards systems and provide a higher level of confidence that all nuclear materials and facilities remained peaceful in nature. Many delegations underlined the voluntary nature of the instrument and the fact that accession thereto was within the sovereign discretion of States.

56. It was noted that the responsibility of ensuring safety and security belonged to each State concerned and should not be used to restrict access to the right to peaceful uses or involved in matters related to obligations to safeguards and the verification of peaceful uses.

57. The view was expressed that a number of issues relating to the safeguards regime, such as the discriminatory approach, discrepancies in practice, the confidentiality regime and authorized sources of data, needed to be discussed among the experts of IAEA and Members to the Conference in its working committee. Other

speakers underlined the fundamental importance of the role of IAEA and welcomed its indispensable efforts in the area of nuclear verification and the promotion of peaceful uses.

58. Some Members highlighted the importance and relevance of existing mechanisms and tools for peaceful uses, such as the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme. However, it was expressed that discussions on stable, robust and dedicated regional institutional arrangements should be preceded by meaningful progress on the establishment of the zone.

59. The deliberations of the Conference are without prejudice to the positions of Members to the Conference at a later stage, nor do they prejudge the outcome of the work of the Conference on any issue.

VII. Endorsement of the President of the sixth session

60. At the 10th meeting, pursuant to decision [A/CONF.236/2023/DEC.3](#), adopted at the fourth session of the Conference, and in accordance with rule 5 (1) of the rules of procedure of the Conference, as contained in document [A/CONF.236/2023/1](#), Members to the Conference endorsed by acclamation Morocco as President of the sixth session and invited the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, Omar Hilale, to preside over the Conference. Mr. Hilale addressed the Conference by video.

61. Members to the Conference congratulated Mr. Hilale on having assumed the presidency of the sixth session of the Conference.

VIII. Preparations for the sixth session

62. The Conference decided that it would hold its sixth session from 17 to 21 November 2025 at United Nations Headquarters.

63. The Conference agreed that the President, in consultation with Members to the Conference, should undertake efforts to prepare for the sixth session. Members to the Conference urged all those Members, observers and relevant international organizations invited in General Assembly decision 73/546 to attend the sixth session of the Conference to provide their constructive contribution and to help to further the process.

Annex

President's summary of the work of the working committee of the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in 2024

Introduction

1. At its fourth session, the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction decided that the working committee would address the following topics in 2024: (a) peaceful uses and technical cooperation; (b) nuclear verification; and (c) an index of indicative list of topics that could be addressed by future sessions of the Conference, in the intersessional period between the fourth and fifth sessions of the Conference.
2. The working committee, established in the Conference decision contained in document [A/CONF.236/2021/DEC.3](#), is mandated to continue deliberations on issues related to the mandate of the Conference, as contained in General Assembly decision 73/546, on the basis of the outcomes of each annual session of the Conference.
3. The deliberations of the working committee and the interaction between Members to the Conference and the invited experts (see paras. 9 and 10 below) are without prejudice to the positions of the Members to the Conference at a later stage of negotiations, nor do they prejudge the outcome of the work of the Conference on relevant issues.
4. The present summary was prepared under the responsibility of the President of the fourth session of the Conference and reflects his views on the discussions that were held within the framework of the working committee in 2024. It does not constitute an outcome agreement among Members to the Conference, nor does it prejudge the positions of any of the Members regarding the issues contained therein. It does not create a precedent for the upcoming sessions of the Conference.

Conduct of the working committee

5. The working committee held three meetings in 2024. The President of the fourth session of the Conference (Libya) and the President-designate of the fifth session (Mauritania) chaired the meetings as co-facilitators.
6. At its 1st meeting, held on 20 February 2024, the working committee discussed the organizational aspects of its work. It decided that two substantive meetings would be held in May and July 2024, respectively, to address the three topics mandated by the Conference at its fourth session and would follow the format of the previous working committee's meetings of presentations by invited experts, followed by interactive discussions among Members to the Conference and with the invited experts.
7. At the 2nd meeting of the working committee, held from 30 April to 2 May 2024, Members to the Conference discussed peaceful uses and technical cooperation, and presentations were given by experts invited to the meeting.
8. At its 3rd meeting, held on 1 and 2 July 2024, the working committee discussed nuclear verification, and presentations were given by experts invited to the meeting. Members to the Conference also discussed the index of indicative list of topics that could be addressed by future sessions of the Conference.

9. As agreed, a number of experts, drawn from a list approved by Members to the Conference, were invited to give a briefing to the working committee on the specified topics on the agenda of its meetings.
10. The following experts participated in the second meeting of the working committee:
- (a) Vivian Okeke (International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA));
 - (b) Yvonne Mensah (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW));
 - (c) Oscar Meless (Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit);
 - (d) Mustafa Kibaroglu (MEF University);
 - (e) Amnah Ibraheem (International Institute for Strategic Studies);
 - (f) Mohammad Taghi Hosseini (Institute of Political and International Studies);
 - (g) Nisreen Al-Hmoud (Royal Scientific Society).
11. The following experts participated in the 3rd meeting of the working committee:
- (a) Jenni Rissanen (IAEA);
 - (b) Noah Mayhew (Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation);
 - (c) Mohammad Taghi Hosseini (Institute of Political and International Studies);
 - (d) André Buys (Scientific Advisory Group – Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, University of Pretoria);
 - (e) Jørn Osmundsen (Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues);
 - (f) James Revill (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research).

Peaceful uses and technical cooperation

12. The President prepared a discussion paper on the topic of peaceful uses, which was circulated to participating States prior to the meeting of the working committee. The paper follows the annex to the present report.
13. Members to the Conference emphasized the inalienable right to peaceful uses, as reflected in existing multilateral instruments, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. A number of States reaffirmed what was agreed upon during the third session of the Conference regarding the illegality of imposing unilateral coercive measures due to their negative impact on the inherent right to peaceful uses. The view was expressed that the treaty should include clear language that underscores the inalienable right of States parties to peaceful uses and international cooperation, condemns unilateral coercive measures, and prohibits their imposition.
14. Experts from (IAEA, OPCW and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit gave a briefing to the working committee on existing cooperation and technical assistance mechanisms and programmes for States members of the three organizations. It was recommended that those existing cooperation and assistance mechanisms be utilized in promoting peaceful uses and cooperation within the framework of the future Middle East zone.
15. Invited experts provided an overview of the different approaches by other nuclear-weapon-free zones to the promotion of and potential cooperation in peaceful

uses of nuclear energy among States parties to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. The approaches included:

(a) The establishment of a specialized body that would encourage regional and/or subregional programmes for cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology or ensure the supply of nuclear material, such as a consortium for fuel production;

(b) The conclusion of agreements with specialized international agencies, such as IAEA, OPCW and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, to facilitate exchanges of material or knowledge;

(c) Ad hoc arrangements that could cover cooperation on a wide range of peaceful activities, including exchanges of material or knowledge, capacity-building, fostering transparency on peaceful activities by nuclear-weapon-free zone member States, and ensuring common standards for safety and security.

16. Some Members to the Conference considered that such arrangements could either be included in the future treaty or decided at a later stage (e.g. at a meeting of States parties to a zone treaty). The view was expressed that the foundation on which regional cooperation should be built should be the accession of all Members to the Conference to the relevant existing multilateral instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction, namely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and stressed that all nuclear, chemical and biological facilities in all States should be subject to relevant international oversight. The view was expressed that it was premature to discuss the establishment of a mechanism for international cooperation, given in particular the absence of relationships between some of the States in the region.

17. Members to the Conference considered that the approaches of various regions offered valuable references and stressed that the choice of arrangements would be based on the identified needs and unique characteristics of the Middle East region. Some Members to the Conference raised the issue of the growing energy needs of the region when considering how to incorporate provisions on peaceful uses into the future treaty.

18. At the meeting, several practical considerations were discussed to determine a suitable approach to the promotion of and potential cooperation in peaceful uses in nuclear, chemical and biological fields and possible regional arrangement. The first consideration was the scope of activities or tasks that the Members to the Conference would want the arrangement to cover. In that connection, Members to the Conference emphasized that the future treaty should avoid duplicating arrangements that already existed through specialized international agencies. The second consideration was the level of cooperation that members to the treaty would prefer. The third and final consideration was the costs and required human capacity that any arrangement would require. In that regard, some Members to the Conference stressed the importance of addressing regional capacity-building needs.

Nuclear verification

19. The President prepared a discussion paper on the topic of nuclear verification, which was circulated to participating States prior to the meeting of the working committee. The paper follows the present annex.

20. The meeting included presentations by an IAEA expert on the different universal safeguards agreements, as well the regional arrangements of IAEA, including those

with nuclear-weapon-free zones. With regard to IAEA safeguards agreements, the expert explained that, while comprehensive safeguards agreements provided assurances that declared facilities were used solely for peaceful purposes, the additional protocol provided extended assurances that all materials in a given State remained for peaceful uses only. With regard to States in which both a comprehensive safeguards agreement and the additional protocol were in force, the expert was able to draw the broader conclusion that all nuclear material in a State remained in peaceful activities.

21. One invited expert discussed lessons from past nuclear disarmament cases in which nuclear weapons programmes had been dismantled prior to joining the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

22. With regard to current efforts, the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification gave a briefing to the committee on the main outcomes of the Group's work and next steps.

Index of the list of possible thematic topics that could be addressed by future sessions of the Conference

23. At its fourth session, the Conference requested that its working committee prepare an indicative, non-exhaustive, evolving and subject to further review index of the list of possible thematic topics that could be discussed under the agenda item allocated for thematic discussions, and to submit the index for the consideration of the Conference at its fifth session.

24. The President's discussion paper, which included draft elements for the index of the list of topics was circulated to participating States prior to the second meeting of the working committee. Members to the Conference were invited to provide inputs to the circulated draft at the meeting and in two subsequent rounds of review.

25. The version of the index of the list of topics below, which will be submitted for further consideration by the fifth session of the Conference, reflects the topics that garnered the consensus of Members to the Conference following the two rounds of review and consultations by the President of the fourth session.

Attachment

Index of the list of possible thematic topics that could be addressed by the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

Introduction

At its fourth session, the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction requested its working committee to prepare an indicative, non-exhaustive, evolving and subject to further review index of the list of possible thematic topics that could be discussed under the agenda item allocated for thematic discussions, and to submit the index for the consideration of the Conference at its fifth session. The present discussion paper has been prepared to facilitate the preparation of the index pursuant to that request.

The topics included in the present paper are drawn from multilateral legal instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction, as well as treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. This open-ended index of the list of topics is prepared without prejudice to the positions and proposals of the Members to the Conference on those topics, nor do they prejudge the outcome of the work of the Conference on any issues.

The index of the list of possible thematic topics that could be addressed by future sessions of the Conference has no bearing on the structure and discussion of a possible future treaty, whether in format or in content.

Preliminary topics to be considered

- Terms and definitions¹ relating to nuclear, biological and chemical weapons
- Obligations and prohibitions relating to nuclear, chemical and biological aspects
- Joining multilateral legal instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction
- Prohibitions applicable to States parties
- Verification
- Promoting peaceful uses and removing obstacles to its realization
- Cooperation, consultation and clarification and dispute settlement
- Institutional arrangements
- Entry into force
- Declarations
- Protocols
- Object and purpose
- Geographic scope
- Duration
- Relationship with other agreements

¹ The content and scope of this discussion is evolving and will be guided by the deliberations of the Conference and the identification of issues that could require definition.