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ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN
THE REGION OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 20 April 1981 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of
the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations addressed
to the Secretary-General

Further to the Permanent Representative's letter of 26 February 1981 (A/36/112-S/14387) concerning my Government's ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (General Assembly resolution 2373 (XXII), annex), I have the honour to bring the following to your attention:

1. It is the view of the Government of Egypt that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is a milestone on the road towards achieving nuclear disarmament and, as such, constitutes an important step towards general and complete disarmament.
2. The Treaty, in article VII, recognizes "the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties in order to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories". The importance of this article is that it takes into account the realities of the various regions of the world. The Treaty, therefore, while establishing a general and comprehensive régime, makes provision for the characteristics of each particular region. Therefore the Treaty, and in particular article VII, clearly accommodates the conditions inherent in the Middle East.
3. As a manifestation of Egypt's commitment to the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Egypt has, since the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly in 1974, advocated the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It is also important to recall in this connexion that Egypt has consistently maintained that the adherence to the non-proliferation Treaty would strengthen the nuclear-weapon-free régime. Therefore, all Assembly resolutions calling for the establishment of

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such a zone, including resolution 35/147, urged "all parties concerned as a means of promoting this objective (i.e. the nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East) to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons". It is pertinent to recall in this respect that the latter resolution was adopted without objection. Thus, for the first time since the adoption of Assembly resolution 3263 (XXIX), all concerned parties supported the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

4. Encouraged by such a development, Egypt decided to ratify the non-proliferation Treaty. Such a step should be seen as a further commitment on the part of Egypt to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East as well as an additional manifestation of its determination to ensure that nuclear weapons are not introduced in our region.

5. General Assembly resolution 35/147 provided for various approaches towards the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone. Such approaches should not be seen as alternatives but rather as complementary and mutually reinforcing. One of the approaches is stipulated in paragraph 6 of the resolution. This approach provides for a role for the Secretary-General in the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The resolution invited the Secretary-General "to continue to explore the possibilities of making progress towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East". In the light of the step taken by my Government and to safeguard the momentum generated therefrom, it may be appropriate to consider undertaking a study to explore the modalities for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, taking into account the characteristics particular to the region. In this connexion, the comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones undertaken by an Ad Hoc Group of Qualified Governmental Experts under the auspices of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in 1975 1/ may be a source upon which the study in question may draw.

6. It is the considered view of my Government that a study on the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East will undoubtedly facilitate the establishment of the zone, in so far as it may help to focus the attention of the concerned parties on the modalities required to establish the nuclear-weapon-free zone.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my Government's firm conviction that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a crucial and sensitive area such as the Middle East will not only contribute towards the achievement of peace and stability in the region but will undoubtedly constitute a significant contribution to the cause of world peace.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No. 27 A (A/10027/Add.1), annex I.

I kindly request the circulation of this letter as an official document of the General Assembly under item 46 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Nabil A. ELARABY
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