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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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

Letter dated 26 October 1981 from the Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to reiterate and reaffirm the position of Israel on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Speaking in the general debate of the General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Shamir, stated on 1 October 1981:

"The only genuine way to remove the nuclear threat to the Middle East can be found in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, freely and directly negotiated among the countries of the region and based on mutual assurances, on the pattern of the Tlatelolco Treaty of Latin America ...

"[Israel] shall continue to advocate and support constructive steps genuinely advancing the prospect of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons." 1/

In this connexion, I should also like to refer to a statement made by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, whose 18 distinguished members come from countries representing different political backgrounds, namely, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America. At its

1/ A/36/PV.22, p. 66.

meeting held at Mexico City from 13 to 18 September 1981, the Commission gave special consideration to the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones. On 18 September 1981, the Commission issued a statement expressing its support for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, to be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. The members of the Commission welcomed the revival of interest during recent years in nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world and stated that such zones constituted one of the most effective means for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

It will be recalled that, at the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly, Israel submitted a draft resolution (A/C.1/35/L.8) calling upon all States in the Middle East to "convene at the earliest possible date a conference with a view to negotiating a multilateral treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East". The text of the draft resolution is attached for easy reference. This proposal was renewed and elaborated in my letter of 9 June 1981 addressed to Your Excellency (A/36/315).

In the view of the Government of Israel, and as reflected also in the language of paragraph 61 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2) the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a specific geographic region should take into account "the characteristics of each region".

The Middle East is a region characterized by conflict and tension. Besides the Arab-Israel dispute, there exist in the area other serious conflicts, some of which have developed into armed confrontations, such as the current war between Iraq and Iran, which has already entered its second year. In such regional circumstances, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone could serve as a credible barrier to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Paragraph 67 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session clearly recognizes that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones may be interchangeable with adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Israel is fully aware of the many political differences among the States of the Middle East. However, without prejudice to any political or legal claim, it behoves all the States of the region, for the sake of their common future, to take concrete steps towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

I have the honour to request that this letter and its attachment be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda items 33 and 46.

(Signed) Yehuda Z. BLUM
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations

ANNEX

Draft resolution concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East submitted by Israel to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming paragraph 60 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, which reads as follows: "The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned constitutes an important disarmament measure",

Aware of the urgent need to establish such a zone in the Middle East, in view of conflict situations which threaten the peace of that region,

Convinced that the effective way to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East is through negotiations leading to the establishment of a system of mutually-binding obligations which would provide each State in the region with a contractual assurance of others' compliance with the commitment to abstain from introducing nuclear weapons into the region,

Recalling its resolution 31/70 on the comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects, particularly paragraph 3, which reiterates the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can contribute to the security of members of such zones, to the prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons and to the goals of general and complete disarmament,

Recalling further its resolution 33/91 B of 16 December 1979 on confidence-building measures and convinced that the adherence of all Member States of the Middle East region to a treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would in itself serve to reduce tensions and pave the way for the introduction of further confidence-building measures,

1. Calls upon all States of the Middle East and non-nuclear-weapon States adjacent to the region, which are not signatories to any treaty providing for a nuclear-weapon-free zone, to convene at the earliest possible date a conference with a view to negotiating a multilateral treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East;
2. Urges all States of the region to state by 1 May 1981 their willingness to participate in the conference;
3. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the necessary facilities for the convening of such a conference.
