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Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

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Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/54/150.

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 10 of its resolution 53/74 of 4 December 1998, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region of the Middle East and other concerned States, in accordance with paragraph 7 of Assembly resolution 46/30 of 6 December 1991 and taking into account the evolving situation in the region, and to seek from those States their views on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study annexed to his report¹ or other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In paragraph 11 of the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-fourth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report is submitted in response to the request contained in paragraph 11 of resolution 53/74.

II. Observations

3. The Secretary-General has continued to attach particular importance to the issue and has, as in previous years, carried out various consultations with concerned parties within and outside the region in order to explore ways and means of promoting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, taking into account in particular the evolving situation in the region.

4. The Secretary-General welcomes the fact that all Arab States have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. He has noted their reaffirmed determination to exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the early establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

5. The Secretary-General also wishes to draw attention to the work accomplished by the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session, and in particular to the text on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, which was adopted by consensus by the Disarmament Commission on 30 April 1999.² In this connection, he notes that there is agreement that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions for which consensus resolutions of the General Assembly exist, such as the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as the development of zones free from all weapons of mass destruction, should be encouraged.³

6. The Secretary-General notes with regret that since his last report on the issue to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, no further positive developments have occurred in the consideration of the issue and that the impasse in the work of the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security has continued. The Secretary-General maintains the view that, under appropriate circumstances, the Working Group could still play a useful role as a forum for discussing a broad range of arms control, disarmament and confidence-building measures, including the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region.

7. For that reason, the Secretary-General again strongly urges all concerned parties to review the situation in order to determine possible new approaches and to resume discussions with a view to developing practical concepts that would make it possible to establish a common position as expeditiously as possible. This would serve as a confidence-building measure in itself and would also facilitate the overall peace process. The Secretary-General reaffirms the readiness of the United Nations to provide any assistance deemed helpful in moving the discussions forward.

8. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution 53/74, replies were received from China and Saudi Arabia. Any additional replies from Member States will be issued as addenda to the present report.

III. Replies received from Governments

China

[Original: English]
[14 May 1999]

China has all along respected and supported the efforts by non-nuclear-weapon States to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among themselves. Based on the above-mentioned position, China has consistently supported the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. China is in favour of General Assembly resolution 53/74 and supports the Secretary-General in continuing to pursue consultations with the States of the region and other concerned States on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia

[Original: Arabic]

[19 April 1999]

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms the views expressed in its reply to the Secretary-General as reproduced in his report on the item to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, in 1996 (see A/51/286).

Notes

¹ A/45/435.

² *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/54/42), annex I.*

³ *Ibid.*, para. 40.
