

The Middle East Issue; Possibilities of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone*

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The signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967, a year before the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, inspired and encouraged many regions around the world to follow suite. Today nuclear-weapon-free zones have been equally established in the South Pacific, South-East Asia and Africa. Attempts are being made to establish such zones in other regions of the world including the Middle East where the new idea of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction seems to be gaining strength and greater attention by the countries of the region themselves. The latter idea was proposed by President Mubarak in 1990 parallel to and not in succession to the earlier proposal of a nuclear-weapon-free zone put forward for the first time jointly by Egypt and Iran in 1974. Both are interrelated and the idea of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction could not be fully grasped without the understanding of the 1974 proposal as it evolved over the years.

Both proposals are of the utmost importance for a number of reasons. The Middle East is still politically unsettled and, therefore, military conflicts may be difficult to prevent because of deep-rooted problems. The disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the availability of potential suppliers of equipment and material which could be used as components of weapons of mass destruction . Countries of the Middle East may also enhance their existing capabilities in weapon technology with the help of other developing countries. All these weapons are a source of instability and will not promote cooperation or build up confidence among the States of the region. Many countries around the World, including the United States and other Western States, are deeply involved in the Middle East peace process . They are concerned about its stability, the Middle East being a great source of energy potential and a unique strategic location accessible to Africa, West Asia, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

The peace process in the Middle East, since the Madrid Conference in 1991 and the agreements signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in September 1993 and May 1994, is going through a very difficult period since the new Government in Israel took office in June 1996. But even before that the multilateral track of the peace process and the work of the five Working Groups including the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) came to a stand still late 1994 and early 1995. Alas, the latter group would have been an ideal vehicle to promote and develop the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

At the outset we shall endeavor to draw an over view of the ideas of establishing the two zones, how they relate to each other and their chances of evolving further and becoming a reality. This would be followed by a brief discussion of the basic elements required in the making of such zones, namely the scope of prohibition, geographic delimitation and modalities with special emphasis on verification. This would take us to the negotiating phase which has already started within the League of Arab States on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East as earlier indicated since 1994.

An Over View

Egypt joined Iran in taking the initiative in 1974 at the United Nations General Assembly for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Later, Egypt undertook on its own the pursuance of that initiative every year at the UN General Assembly⁴. At the beginning, Israel abstained in the vote on the Egyptian initiative but as of 1980 it joined in adopting the annual UN General Assembly resolutions on this matter by consensus, which was one of the reasons that prompted Egypt to ratify the NPT in 1981.

The UN General Assembly resolutions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East evolved over the years. Without going into a detailed examination of the wording and the provisions of these resolutions, it is quite sufficient here to enumerate the essential features as they stand more or less at present:

- The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone supplements the NPT. The universal adherence to the latter is urged.
- Until the establishment of such a zone is realised, all the countries concerned must make serious declarations that they will abstain on a reciprocal basis from testing, producing, storing or possessing in whatever form nuclear-weapons and the means to deliver them.
- Until the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, all the countries must declare that they will abstain on a reciprocal basis from allowing any third party to keep nuclear weapons on their territories.
- A major role for the IAEA is predicted in safeguarding the nuclear activities of the countries concerned. Pending the establishment of the zone, countries of the region who have not yet accepted IAEA full scope safeguards should agree to do so.
- The declaration that the countries make with regard to the zone should be deposited with the UN Security Council.
- The nuclear-weapon States, not only have to abstain from any activity that would be in conflict with the goal of establishing such a nuclear-Weapon -free zone but also have to co-operate fully in this matter.
- The role of UN Secretary General is to continue to look for all possibilities for making progress towards the establishment of such a zone.

- As of 1991 a reference is made to Egypt's proposal for establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

In 1988, the UN General Assembly took an important step forward in adopting a resolution requesting the UN Secretary General to prepare a study on effective and verifiable measures which would facilitate the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East². Three consultants were appointed by the Secretary General to assist in the preparation of the study. By October 1990 it was made available to the members of the UN³. This was not the first study of its kind undertaken by the UN. In 1975, a group of qualified governmental experts prepared a study on nuclear-weapon-free zones in all their aspects⁴.

The 1990 study reached the conclusion that it was feasible to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The study should be a basic tool for any negotiator in the ongoing attempts to trigger talks on the establishment of such a zone. We shall come back to this study later, in some of its aspects.

In 1990, and a few months before issuing the UN study, and as earlier indicated, President Mubarak of Egypt proposed in April the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

President Mubarak proposal was made a few months before the eruption of the Gulf crisis triggered by the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq. Egypt, in fact, had sensed the dangers menacing the stability of the Middle East from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Apart from the Israeli nuclear capabilities, which have been a great source of worries in the whole region, the revelations about the Iraqi capabilities in the planning and production of weapons of mass destruction including chemical and biological weapons proved that Egypt's worries were not unfounded.

President Mubarak's proposal comprised three components⁵:

- All weapons of mass destruction without exception in the Middle East should be prohibited, namely nuclear, chemical, biological or otherwise.
- All States of the region without exception should make equal and reciprocal commitments in this regard.
- Verification measures and modalities should be established to ascertain full compliance by the States in the region with the full scope of that prohibition without exception.

Egypt underscored certain terms to be taken into account in this regard:

- A qualitative as well as quantitative symmetry in the military capabilities of the individual States of the Middle East. Precarious symmetries cannot continue to prevail in a region striving for a just and comprehensive peace.

- Increased security at lower levels of armament. Security must be attained through political deliberations and disarmament and arrangements rather than the force of arms.
- Arms limitation and disarmament agreements, should consider equal rights, responsibilities and States should equally issue legally binding commitments in the field of disarmament.

At the beginning, the idea received a lukewarm support by the major Western Powers. For example, the statement made by the Foreign and Commonwealth spokesman in the United Kingdom just took note of the proposal without any further comment.

Later on, the five major supplier countries of arms, which happen to be the five permanent members of the UN Security Council supported the idea in their meeting in Paris in July 1991. They even stated that essential steps forward in achieving this goal would include the full implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 687 of April 3rd 1991 on Iraq, a resolution which clearly expressed concern over the threat which all weapons of mass destruction pose to peace and security in the region.

In this respect, the implementation of Security Council resolution 687 with regard to Iraq makes us wonder whether a nuclear-weapon-free Iraq or an Iraq free of weapons of mass destruction could be a dramatic beginning of the two zones under consideration here!

Moreover, on 29 May 1991 the US President George Bush presented a proposal on the question of arms control in the Middle East. The proposal stressed the necessity of the adherence of all States in the region to the NPT and called upon all major weapon-exporting countries to cease the supply of weapons of mass destruction to the region.

Almost a year after President Bush's proposal, the UN Security Council in a statement made at the end of a summit meeting on 31 January 1992, considered that the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security⁶.

President Mubarak's initiative for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East received great support at the Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Cairo in June 1994. The Ministers paid tribute to the initiative and called for its realization.

With the advent of the peace process in the Middle East and the establishment of a Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) of the Madrid Process, there was hope that this mechanism would constitute a practical and pragmatic way to negotiate in more detail the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The ACRS Group had six plenary meetings so far alternating twice between Washington and Moscow and a meeting in each of Qatar and Tunis. The latter was the last plenary of the Working Group in December 1994. No progress had been made on the establishment of such zones in the Group. However, a marginal progress had been made with regard to confidence

building measures such as, for example, the participation of representatives of the countries of the Multilateral Working Group in an exercise of the CSE which took place in the United Kingdom in March 1993. Moreover, in July of the same year, Egypt hosted an intercessional workshop on the issue of verification of arms control agreements on different weapon systems and confidence building measures⁷. With regard to the latter, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), organized a two-session seminar on confidence building in the Middle East in Malta and Turkey in 1994.

In the meeting of the ACRS in Moscow in November 1993, the Israelis seemed reluctant to enter more deeply into nuclear issues not to mention the modalities of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, although the Israelis have on many occasions supported fully the idea. They even joined as earlier indicated the consensus at the UN on the importance of creating such a zone since 1980. It was hoped that the two co-sponsors of the Peace Conference, Russia and the US, would have exerted more influence on the Israelis to push ahead with the discussions on the two zones. It was believed that the more there was progress on the bilateral negotiations track the more there would have been progress in the Working Group. One of the encouraging features in the latter was the UN/IAEA participation in it since its third meeting in Washington, May 1993. Moreover, the Director of UNIDIR joined the UN/IAEA team.

UNIDIR later contributed greatly to the in-depth study and analysis of basic and intricate issues of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. In 1996 it issued a study on the zone, which is considered to be a twin study to the 1990 UN's study on the nuclear-weapon-free zone⁸. This study too should be another basic tool for negotiators attempting to establish such a zone.

The two zones proposals are on the table. Any progress achieved with regard to one of them would have a positive impact on the other . It is to be noted , however, that the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement, at their aforementioned Conference in Cairo in June 1994, considered the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones a necessary first step towards attaining the objective of elimination of weapons of mass destruction. They were of the view that the elimination of nuclear weapons from the region of the Middle East should be conducive to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction .

In this regard it should be pointed out that a number of Arab countries have refused to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention in Paris in January 1993 for the simple reason that Israel has not yet acceded the NPT or has not yet accepted the application of full scope safeguards on all its nuclear activities and has not shown real interest in pursuing the nuclear-weapon-free zone proposal. It must be said, however, that those Arab countries are fully convinced of the merits of the Chemical Weapons Convention and some of them, such as Egypt, have fully participated in the negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva leading to the conclusion of the Convention, yet they considered it difficult to sign it at a time when Israel has unsafeguarded nuclear activities that are looked upon as a real threat to the region and its security. The position of the Arab States is not new. Their position has been made clear since the convening of the Paris Conference of 1989 on chemical weapons.

There is also an apparent link between the establishment of a nuclear-weapon- free zone in the Middle East and the one in Africa. Some African States, specifically the African states members

of the League of Arab States are would be parties to both zones. This link has been recognized by the UN and OAU working group entrusted with the working out of modalities of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone, which was opened for signature in Cairo on 11 April 1996, the so-called Treaty of Pelindaba⁹. It is not a far fetched proposition to say that some African members of the League of Arab States may postpone their ratification of the Treaty until a similar zone has been established in the Middle East, although all of them are parties to the NPT.

Almost a year before, at the NPT Extension Review Conference in New York, April - May 1995, the Conference in its resolution on the Middle East, favored the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East¹⁰. The Foreign Minister of Egypt, in his statement to the UN General Assembly on 24 September 1996 called upon the Security Council permanent members and the Depository Governments of the NPT to take specific steps to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Let us move now to the different aspects of the establishment of a zone free of weapon mass destruction. Some of the aspects are also relevant to the nuclear-weapon-free zone. These aspects include the scope of prohibition, geographic delimitation and modalities with more emphasis on verification requirements. These aspects have been dealt with by a technical Committee of the League of Arab States, which was established on 27 March 1994 to negotiate a Treaty text establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We shall highlight the progress made so far on some aspects. The Committee held five meetings so far, the last one of which was on 17-18 December 1996. Almost all Arab States are represented in the committee.

The Scope of Prohibition

All weapons of mass destruction will have to be prohibited. Nuclear weapons have not been defined in the NPT. A definition was provided, however, in Article 5 of the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America, which reads as follows:

"For the purpose of this Treaty, a nuclear weapon is any device which is capable of releasing nuclear energy in an uncontrolled manner and which has a group of characteristics that are appropriate for warlike purposes. An instrument that may be used for the transport or propulsion of the device is not included in this definition if it is separable from the device and not indivisible part thereof¹¹."

The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, in its Article I(c)' reads as follows:

"Nuclear Explosive device" means any nuclear weapon, or other explosive device capable of releasing nuclear energy, irrespective of the purpose for which it could be used. The term includes such a weapon or device in unassembled and partly assembled forms, but does not include the means of transport or delivery of such a weapon or device if separable from and not an indivisible part of it¹²;"

This definition is identical to the definition in the Treaty of Rarotonga of 1985 and similar to the definition of "nuclear weapon" in Article I of the Treaty on The Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone of 1995, the So-called Treaty of Bangkok.

However, the term nuclear weapons in the NPT was understood to mean nuclear bombs and

warheads. The negotiators of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East may wish to choose between the definitions referred to above.

It should also be pointed out that the NPT prohibits as well along with nuclear weapons "other nuclear explosive devices". This term was introduced in the Treaty to take into consideration the potential use of nuclear explosive devices for peaceful purposes. This technology did not prove to be feasible and the whole issue of nuclear peaceful explosions (PNEs) has been left to rest, although referred to by China in the negotiations of the CTBT at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

As to the chemical weapons which should be prohibited, they should include all chemical warfare agents, gaseous, liquid or solid which are banned because of their toxic effect on man, animal and plant. Chemical weapons have much in common with biological weapons but a greater degree of control can be exerted on their effects.

It should be useful to recall that 1925 Geneva Protocol is a principal international instrument against the use of Chemical Weapons¹³. However, experience of recent years shows that it falls short of coping with developments which took place in several areas as far as production, use, acquisition and stock piling. Needless to say that the Geneva Protocol of 1925 only bans the use of Chemical Weapons but not their production or their possession¹⁴.

The negotiators of a zone free of weapon of mass destruction will have to rely on both the Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention signed in Paris , January 1993 . Likewise, they will have to rely on the Biological Weapons Convention which was concluded in 1972 prohibiting development , production, stock piling and acquisition of Biological Weapons. It is quite significant that while some Arab States as mentioned earlier, have not signed the Paris Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993, only 10 Middle Eastern countries have ratified the Biological Weapons Convention.

In the Arab League negotiations agreement has been reached that all weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical, biological and others (radiological) should be prohibited. The tendency is to define these weapons in protocols attached to the Treaty establishing the zone. The definition will include relevant material and facilities. The intention is to keep those protocols brief and to the point. Missiles and other delivery vehicles have been excluded from the scope of prohibition. They were considered to be outside the purview of a treaty banning weapons of mass destruction.

The Geographic Delimitations

The 1975 UN study on nuclear-weapon-free zones presupposed that a zone in the Middle East would include 15 States extending from Libya to Iran including the Gulf States and Israel. The UN study was strictly abiding by a legal UN practice of what is considered to be the Middle East. Therefore, it did not include the other Northern African States: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, nor did it include the Sudan or Somalia (Djibouti and the Comoros Islands were not yet members of the Arab League). In this respect it should be recalled that many Middle Eastern Countries questioned the Wisdom of ascertaining the views of only 15 countries. It

should be recalled that the Arab League in 1974 was of the opinion that a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East should include all the Arab States plus Iran and Israel.

The 1990 UN study took a different course than that of the 1975 study. It benefited also from a study made by the IAEA which included a similar definition to that of the 1975 study¹⁵. The new study spoke of core countries and peripheral countries. Core countries meant the Middle Eastern Countries involved in the Arab Israeli conflict plus Iran. The peripheral countries are those existing in the area that can be involved in the establishment of the zone but not necessarily from the beginning.

The 1990 UN study also did not miss to mention the seas areas such as the Red Sea and the Gulf as well as the inclusion of the international waterways such as the Suez Canal. The countries of the Middle East will probably learn from the experience of the Parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. For example, the latter seems to permit the transit of nuclear weapons through the Panama Canal and this had triggered serious reservations. In the Middle East serious thought should be given to such a delicate and intricate issue. In this regard, Article 2 of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone states that nothing in the Treaty establishing the zone will affect in any way the rights of States with regard to the freedom of the seas.

Inter-Arab negotiations tend to include all Arab States plus Iran and Israel within the zone. It is not envisaged to establish such a zone without Israel becoming party to it. Although a number of issues have been agreed upon and will not be reopened for negotiations between the Arab countries, it is not yet clear whether Israel and Iran would have the right to reopen certain issues on which consensus has emerged.

A number of Arab States would favor including Turkey and Cyprus in the definition of the Middle east. As to peripheral or neighboring States, some mention Turkey, Pakistan and the European Mediterranean States. It is intended to have an annex to the Treaty establishing the zone dealing with the obligations of the neighboring States. Maps of the States constituting the zone and the neighboring States will also be attached to the Treaty.

Modalities With Special Emphasis on Verification

A nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East presupposes that the parties to it may have already adhered to the NPT . All the Arab States are now Parties to it. Iran is also a Party . Israel would be expected to adhere to the NPT if it were to join a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. However, if Israel were to opt to join a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East before adhering to the NPT, this would be a welcomed step. In this regard it should be noted that Brazil is a Party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco but not yet to the NPT. Having said this, the Arab States expect Israel to adhere to the NPT as soon as possible. The main obligations of the parties to such a zone would be similar to those undertaken in the NPT plus an obligation to guarantee the complete absence of nuclear weapons on their territories in the established zone and to refrain from nuclear testing. Moreover, the zone should also benefit from negative guarantees similar to those secured by the Parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and to other similar Treaties, i.e. the none use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons against the States of the zone. It is also envisaged to have a protocol attached to the Treaty establishing the zone to which the five

permanent members of the Security Council would subscribe.

In working out the different provisions of the zone, negotiators may wish to benefit from the experience gained in negotiating the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty of Roratonga the Treaty of Bangkok, and The Treaty of Pelindaba. For example, the inter-Arab negotiations tend to support an indefinite duration of the Treaty. A minority view preferred 15 years renewable.

On waste disposal, the inter-Arab negotiations tend to prohibit countries outside the zone from using Arab territories for disposing of their waste whether it is nuclear, chemical or biological.

One of the most difficult and delicate issues to deal with is the verification issue. As in the case of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, IAEA safeguards should be applicable in the case of a nuclear-weapon- free zone in the Middle East. The IAEA is already involved in studying the application of safeguards in the Middle East¹⁶. In its report to the General Conference of the IAEA in September 1993, the IAEA Secretariat reported the responses and comments of some states of the region¹⁷. The common denominator in the responses so far received by the Agency is the central role expected to be played by the IAEA. In one of the responses, the establishment of a regional authority and the creation of a regional inspectorate to work jointly with the IAEA following the conclusion of a peaceful settlement in the Middle East were suggested. This suggestion seems to follow the example of OPANAL established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco to oversee the proper implementation of Treaty provisions, especially verification.

From the many discussions with the countries of the region, the Director General of the IAEA concluded that existing comprehensive safeguards, alone, would not suffice as means of verification. Most likely some combination of international and regional or bilateral announcements would have to be worked out. Dr Hans Blix reported to the UN General Assembly the idea of incorporating additional features to strengthen its safeguards system by introducing regional or mutual inspection by the parties. This latter verification has been adopted by Argentina and Brazil (ABACC), an example that could be followed in other parts of the world to build up confidence and enhance assurances. Moreover, Middle East zone can also benefit from the Uratom experience, now that a number of states in the region have invested in nuclear research have been contemplating an investment in nuclear power generation.

In this regard, it is worth noting that in the period preceding the Extension and Review Conference of the NPT in New York, April-May 1995, and in the framework of attempts to induce Israel to adhere to the NPT, Israel seemed to accept mutual inspection of Egyptian and Israeli nuclear facilities which did not include the Dimona facility. This was not acceptable to Egypt as long as Dimona remained outside any control.

In a verification system of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone, the recently concluded Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993 can be of some use, as it provides some interesting features that could be easily copied, such as prompt access by inspectors and challenge inspections.

Another concept which could be of great advantage is the use of soil, air and water sampling to enhance confidence in the absence of undeclared nuclear activities .

The IAEA has also organized a workshop in Vienna in May 1993 on the modalities and the methods of application of safeguards in a future nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East¹⁸. The objective was to assist the Middle Eastern experts in learning the different modes of verifications. A second workshop is being contemplated in 1997.

Israel's adherence to such a zone or to the NPT would be a special case to deal with . An inventory of nuclear material accumulated over the years under no international verifications should be carefully done to guarantee that all nuclear material is accounted for. The adherence of South Africa to the NPT and the signing of the safeguards agreement with the Agency, which were followed by the revelations about South Africa's nuclear-weapon capabilities dismantled before its adherence to the NPT, should be a lesson in the case of future adherence of Israel to the NPT or a nuclear-weapon-free zone or a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. There is a trend favoring discounting past inventory in order to encourage hesitant countries to join the non-proliferation regime. In the case of Israel, such an approach would be self defeating. In the Middle East we shall have to be cautious. Suffice to mention the Iraqi experience and the failure of the IAEA safeguards system to uncover clandestine activities.

With regard to chemical weapons, the modalities and verification system should be greatly guided by the Paris Convention of 1993 . As we have mentioned before, the Convention has introduced new verification techniques including prompt access by inspectors and challenge inspections as well as environmental samplings.

As to Biological weapons, also the modalities of the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972 would be of great use in working out the modalities of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction . However it must be said that the verification system of the Convention has been extremely primitive. The Ad hoc Conference of the Parties convened in 1994 and the Review Conference of the Parties convened in 1996 do not seem to have been able to strengthen verification.

Many Parties to the Convention have in recent years agreed to implement voluntary confidence-building and transparency-providing measures, exchanging regular reports on their peaceful activities in the field.

The inter-Arab negotiations during their fifth meeting in December 1996, dwelled upon the issue of verification. The questions raised in this regard were as follows:

- Is there a need for an independent mechanism for verification or shall the zone rely on existing intentional systems of verification?
- How to reconcile between a regional mechanism of verification and the obligations undertaken by States of the region under international systems of verification?
- Is it possible to entrust the Arab Organisation for Atomic Energy with the verification role, which would require developing its responsibilities and its financial capabilities?, and would it be under the umbrella of the League of Arab States or would it become a Middle Eastern setup.

- The question of benefiting from certain aspects of the verification systems of other nuclear-weapon-free zones has been raised.

- Financing the mechanism of verification has also been raised.

In the examination of these questions, two tendencies emerged. The minimalist favored a limited mechanism, which would coordinate with and depend upon the existing international systems of verification. The maximalist favored the establishment of an independent mechanism, which would have the full authority to inspect and verify. In the next meeting of the Technical Committee of the League of Arab States, the two options will be further examined on the basis of a study prepared by the Arab Organisation for Atomic Energy.

Future Perspectives

The objective of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is not and has never been in the realm of futuristic dreams, however bleak and desperate the situation in the Middle East may sometimes seem to be. The breakthroughs in the peace process, however meager they may sometimes appear to be, engenders hope that one day the negotiators will dwell upon in depth all aspects pertaining to the establishment of the two zones .

The Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) of the Madrid process offered a good opportunity to proceed with the examination of the establishment of the two zones. It might be difficult to expect much without a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the bilateral tracks. However, time should not be wasted. An early examination and discussion of the various and intricate aspects in the establishment of the two zones would pave the way for more profound work later on. That is why the Arab States are not wasting any time in dealing with the issues hoping that Israel and Iran would join them later. A second informal track to ACRS has been sought of but does not seem to receive the same attention compared to the real track.

The reservoir of knowledge and experience existing in this field and the studies undertaken by the UN, UNIDIR, the IAEA and non-governmental groups should all be drawn upon by government officials involved in the peace process. For example, there are lessons to be learnt from the Iraqi case. The IAEA and the United Nations Security Council special Commission (UNSCOM) gained great experience in the dismantling of weapons of mass destruction.

The road towards the establishment of the zones is bumpy but with a political will the destination can be reached. Others have succeeded in Antarctica, Latin America, the South-Pacific, South-East Asia and Africa may be with less difficulties.

We ought to be reminded that South Africa on the road to majority rule abandoned nuclear weapons, which opened the way to the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Africa. It is hoped that Israel on the road to a just and comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East would give up its nuclear option, which would lead not only to the establishment of a nuclear-

free-zone but to the more ambitious objective of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Needless to say that a number of Middle Eastern States have not yet adhered to the NPT as well as to the Chemical and Biological conventions. The 1990 UN study on a nuclear-weapon-free zone and the 1996 study on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction encourage all States of the region to follow a multifaceted and interdisciplinary regional approach in eliminating and controlling all weapons of mass destruction. They both provide to them not only food for thought but also basic ingredients ready to be used in the making of the two zones.

NOTES:

* This article is an updated version of a previous article entitled "Prospects for Establishing a Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East" in Proliferation Director's Series No.6, Oct. 17, 1994 (Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory), pp. 21-31. It highlights the recent efforts within the League of Arab States to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

(1) For a full account of the initiative and its examination by successive sessions of the UN General Assembly, see Mahmoud Karem, A nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Problems and Prospects, (New York, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988).

(2) UN General Assembly resolution 43/65 of 7 Dec. 1988, Paragraph 8.

(3) UN Doc. A/45/435, 10 Oct. 1990.

(4) UN Doc. A/10027/ADD.1.

(5) See Conference on Disarmament Doc. CD/989, 20 Apr. 1990.

(6) UN Doc. S/23500, 31 Jan. 1992.

(7) For an account of ACRS see Bruce Jentleson, The Middle East Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) Talks: Progress, Problems and Prospects (San Diego: Institute for Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California), IGCC Policy Paper 26, Sept. 1996.

(8) Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, A Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East (New York and Geneva, 1996) (UNIDIR/96/24).

(9) For the text of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, see Arms Control Today, Dec. 1995/Jan. 1996, pp. 15-20.

(10) See NPT/CONF.1995/32 (partI), pp. 13-14.

(11) Status of Multilateral Arms Regulations and Disarmament Agreements (New York: United Nations, 1988, Third Edition:1987), p. 49.

(12) Arms Control Today, loc. cit., p.15.

(13) Status of Multilateral Arms Regulations, op. cit., pp. 5-21.

(14) Moataz M. Zahran, "Towards Establishing a Mass-Destruction- Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East", Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Oct. 1992, p. 26.

(15) Technical Study on Different Modalities of Application of Safeguards in the Middle East. IAEA-GC (XXXIII)/ 887,29 Aug. 1989.

(16) Ibid.

(17) Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East. IAEA GC (XXXVII)/1072, 6 Sept. 1993.

(18) Modalities for the Application of Safeguards in a Future Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East. An International Atomic Agency Workshop, 4-7 May 1993.