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

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## First session

New York, 18–22 November 2019

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

## I. Introduction

1. In its decision 73/546 of 23 December 2018, the General Assembly entrusted the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convene, no later than 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters, a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Decision 73/546 also requests the Secretary-General to convene annual sessions of the conference for the duration of one week at United Nations Headquarters until the conference concludes 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 of the conference

### A. Opening and duration of the conference

2. The first 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 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Twenty-three participating States from the region, four observer States and three relevant international organizations/entities participated in the first session of the Conference. The list of participants is contained in document A/CONF.236/INF/3.

3. The Conference was opened on 18 November 2019 by the Under-Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu. At the same meeting, the Conference elected by acclamation Jordan as President of the Conference and invited Ambassador Sima Bahous (Jordan) to preside over the Conference. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres and President of the General Assembly, Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria), made statements at the opening of the Conference. Other Member States, relevant international organisations, United Nations entities and non-governmental organisations were invited to attend the opening session. Nineteen of the participating States made remarks at the opening session.

## **B. Agenda and programme of work**

4. The Conference adopted, at its second meeting held on 18 November, the Agenda for the First Session as contained in A/CONF.236/1 as follows.

1. Opening of the Conference.
2. Election of the President of the Conference.
3. Address by the President of the Conference.
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. Adoption of the rules of procedure.
9. Credentials of representatives.
10. General debate.
11. Thematic debate.
12. Adoption of the final report and political declaration.
13. Any other business.
14. Closure of the session.

5. At the same meeting, the Conference adopted the Programme of Work for its first session, which is contained in A/CONF.236/5. The Conference also agreed to structure the thematic debate on the basis of the indicative topics proposed in a concept note by the President in A/CONF.236/CRP.1.

### **C. Rules of Procedure**

6. At its fourth meeting, the Conference agreed to proceed on the basis of a statement made by the President of the Conference pending a final agreement on the rules of procedure as follows.

“In order to prepare for this conference being held pursuant to General Assembly decision 73/546, the Presidency has conducted consultations with participating States on the preparation for the conference, including its rules of procedure. I highly appreciate the spirit of cooperation and compromise demonstrated in the process.

While participating States agree to consider the draft rules of procedure of the Conference and agree thereon by consensus, I declare that the Participating States hereby agree that pending the final agreement on the text of the Conference's rules of procedure, consensus will be the only method of decision making on procedural and substantive issues, except rulings by the President on procedural motions related to points of order, and suspension or adjournment of the meeting.”

7. At its tenth meeting, the Conference agreed to continue consideration of the draft Rules of Procedure during the intersessional period.

### **D. Attendance of relevant international organizations, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations**

8. At its second meeting, the Conference decided to invite several relevant international organisations, United Nations entities and non-governmental organisations to attend public meetings as observers of the First Session of the Conference. The decisions are contained in A/CONF.236/Dec.1 and A/CONF.236/Dec.2.

### **E. Documentation**

9. The documents of the conference are available on the website of the Conference. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/topics/conference-on-a-mezf-of-nwadowomd/>

## **III. Credentials**

10. The credentials of representatives and the names of alternate representatives and advisers were submitted to the Secretary-General of the Conference. These were to be issued either by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Secretary-General of the Conference, having examined the received credentials of representatives, noted that as at 22 November 2019:

(a) Formal credentials in due form had been received by the Secretary-General of the Conference for representatives of the following 3 participating States: Algeria, Kuwait and Qatar;

(b) Provisional credentials for the representatives of the following 17 participating States had been communicated to the Secretary-General of the Conference by means of a facsimile communication from their Head of State or Government or Minister for Foreign Affairs or by means of a note verbale or letter from their Permanent Mission in New York: Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen;

(c) The Secretary-General of the Conference had not received formal credentials or other information concerning their representatives from the following 3 participating States: Comoros, Mauritania and Somalia.

11. 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 3 (a) and (b) on the understanding that the originals of the credentials of the representatives of those States referred to in paragraph 3 (b) as well as for the representatives of the States referred to in paragraph 3 (c), where applicable, would be submitted as soon as possible.

#### **IV. General debate**

12. At its third and fourth meetings held on 19 November, the Conference held its general debate. At the third meeting, the Conference heard statements by representatives of Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Yemen, Lebanon, Algeria, Iraq, Sudan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Syria, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. At the fourth meeting, the Conference heard statements by the representatives of State of Palestine, Morocco, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, France, China and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit.

#### **IV. Thematic debate**

13. At the fifth and sixth meetings on 20 November, the Conference held thematic debate. Representatives of participating States exchanged views on a range of related issues, including principles and objectives, general obligations regarding nuclear weapons, and general obligations regarding other weapons of mass destruction, peaceful uses and international cooperation, institutional arrangements, and other aspects. The Conference agreed that representatives from existing nuclear-weapon-free zones organizations should be invited to share their respective good practices and lessons learned with respect to the implementation of treaties of such zones prior to the second session of the Conference.

## **V. Political declaration**

14. At the ninth meeting, the Conference adopted a political declaration as contained in Annex A of this report.

## **VI. Preparation for the Second Session of the Conference**

15. Decisions on the preparation of the next session are contained in A/CONF.236/Dec.3 and A/CONF.236/Dec.4.

16. At the tenth meeting, the Conference decides that its second session will be held from 16 to 20 November 2020 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

17. The Conference agrees that the President, in consultation with participating States, to undertake efforts to prepare for the second session of the Conference.

**Annex A**  
**Political Declaration**  
**First Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone**  
**Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction**  
**New York, 22 November 2019**

We, representatives of participating States at the First Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction (hereinafter “the Conference”), who have met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 18 to 22 November 2019, pursuant to General Assembly decision 73/546:

1. Welcome all initiatives, resolutions, decisions and recommendations on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction;
2. Believe that the establishment of a verifiable Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction would greatly enhance regional and international peace and security;
3. Declare our intent and solemn commitment to pursue in accordance with relevant international resolutions, and in an open and inclusive manner with all invited States, the elaboration of a legally binding treaty to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by consensus by the States of the region;

4. Call upon all States of the Middle East and all other States to refrain from taking any measures that preclude the achievement of the objectives of the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction;
5. Convinced that the realization of this longstanding goal would be facilitated by the participation of all States of the Middle East and to extend an open-ended invitation to all States of the region to lend their support to this Declaration and to join the process;
6. In that spirit, the participants believe that this Conference, through the elaboration of a legally binding treaty establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, could contribute to building regional and international confidence therein;
7. Committed to undertaking efforts to follow-up on this Declaration and on the outcomes of the Conference, and to engage in preparations for the Second Session of the Conference; commend the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in convening the First Session of the Conference, and request his continued efforts, and by relevant international organisations and with the strong support of the international community to the success of this Conference in establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.