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Steps to advance the Middle East peace process and to promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East

Report submitted by the People's Republic of China

China has always followed closely the situation in the Middle East, attached importance to advancing the Middle East peace process, and actively supported the efforts for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In accordance with the provisions of the Final Documents of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, China now reports on the steps taken to advance the Middle East peace process and to promote the establishment of a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

1. China supports and is committed to all multilateral efforts to advance the Middle East peace process

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China always follows closely the development in the Middle East situation and works vigorously to facilitate and promote the peace process. Through bilateral and multilateral channels and in many different ways, China has always advocated peace talks, urging Israel and Palestine to resolve their territorial disputes through political negotiations. By so doing, China has played a unique role in facilitating the Middle East peace process.

(1) Vigorous Efforts by Chinese leaders to promote peace talks

During his visit to Israel and Palestine in April 2000, the then President Jiang Zemin focused on advocating peace talks to leaders of Israel and Palestine and emphasized that “peace is the most precious”. In the same month, President Jiang Zemin met Egyptian President Mubarak in Alexandria. While laying emphasis on the principle of “land for peace”, President Jiang pointed out that national reconciliation between the Arab and Jewish nations leading to

peace in the Middle East was an inexorable trend of history, and that to settle the Middle East question, it was imperative to advocate peace talks rather than use of force, cooperation rather than confrontation, understanding and tolerance rather than hostility and exclusion. The goal of Middle East peace process should be to respect the territorial integrity and sovereign independence of the countries concerned, to restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to statehood, and to ensure that different nations live together in harmony.

In 2001, the then Chairman Li Peng of the National People's Congress, the then Chairman Li Ruihuan of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and the then Vice President Hu Jintao paid separate visits to the Middle East countries and tried to bring the relevant parties around. In 2002, during their visits to West Asian and North African countries and when receiving leaders from those countries in China, the then President Jiang Zemin, the then Premier Zhu Rongji and other Chinese leaders gave targeted explanations of China's principled stand on the Middle East question. In 2003, when talking with foreign leaders in person or on the phone, President Hu Jintao and other Chinese leaders expounded China's stand on the Middle East peace process to them and tried to bring them around.

In addition, the Chinese Foreign Minister engaged in consultation and coordination with his counterparts of Israel, Palestine, Egypt, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France as well as leaders from the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference through phone calls and correspondence on numerous occasions.

(2) China's propositions for resolving the Middle East question

China has on many occasions put forward its views and propositions in light of the particular situation of the Middle East peace process in different historical periods. At the end of 1997, during his visit to five Middle East countries, the then Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen put forward propositions on solving the Middle East question. He emphasized that the Middle East peace talks should be based on the relevant UN resolutions, and should observe the "land for peace" principle adopted at the Madrid Peace Conference. He also called for the abandonment of terrorism and violence of all forms, closer regional economic cooperation and the realization of common development and prosperity.

In December 2001, Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan reiterated China's views on the Middle East question during his visit to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and the headquarters of the Arab League. He stressed that China was opposed to Israel's abuse of force against Palestine and called for an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories and restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people on the basis of the relevant UN resolutions, while at the same time ensuring Israel's security. He also appealed to the international community to increase its attention for and input to the Middle East question, with the Security Council playing a bigger role.

(3) Mediation by the Special Envoy on the Middle East question

In September 2002, responding to the appeal of countries in the Middle East, especially the Arab states, China set up the post and appointed its Special Envoy on the Middle East question in order to further strengthen contacts and communications with the countries concerned in the Middle East and with the international community and to better help realize peace in this region at an early date.

In November 2002, Special Envoy Wang Shijie made his first trip for peace to the Middle East. He visited Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine and held talks with the “Quartet” Special Envoys visiting this region from the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations.

In May 2003, the Chinese Special Envoy paid a visit to Israel and Palestine and expounded to them China’s basic views on the Middle East question. He stressed that China welcomed and supported the “Road Map” Peace Plan for the Middle East; appealed to both sides to immediately stop the exchange of violence and endless reprisals, and reiterated China’s support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state at an early date, and emphasized the necessity to respect the Palestinian people’s right to independently choose their political system and to respect their legitimate leaders chosen through democratic election. He also called for the establishment of a fair, authoritative and effective international monitoring mechanism. In November, the Special Envoy visited Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Palestine and Israel and met with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in south Lebanon. Also in that year, the Special Envoy attended the international meeting of the Geneva Initiative, expressing support for a peaceful resolution of the Middle East question.

In June and September 2004, the Special Envoy visited Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Jordan and Palestine, emphasizing China’s fair and balanced position on the Middle East question, which was taken seriously by all parties concerned. The EU, France and Russia have repeatedly expressed their willingness to strengthen consultation and coordination with China over this question.

In March 2005, the Special Envoy visited Palestine, Israel, Egypt as well as Russia to exchange opinions on peace-promoting efforts.

(4) Recent peace-promoting activities

When Chairman Arafat of the Palestinian National Authority passed away at the end of 2004, President Hu Jintao sent message of condolences to the Palestinian side, Vice President Zeng Qinghong visited the Palestinian Embassy in China to offer condolences and Vice Premier Hui Liangyu attended Arafat’s funeral as the Special Envoy of President Hu. In December, State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan paid purposeful visits to Palestine and Israel, to work on both sides in light of their specific concerns. He put forth a four-point proposition on resolving the Middle East question, i.e., building mutual trust, resuming peace talks, restarting the “Road Map” Plan, and establishing an independent Palestine state. He stressed that the “Road Map” Peace Plan for the Middle East was a practical and feasible plan to resolve the question at the current stage, and

that the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians should be respected and an independent Palestinian state be established as early as possible, while the security of Israel is also fully guaranteed. Active efforts should be made to bring about a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. As the peace process progresses, economic cooperation among countries in the region should be strengthened and peace and stability in the region should be in order to eventually achieve harmonious coexistence between the Arab and Jewish nations. The international community should intensify its peace-promoting efforts. He stated clearly that China supported a bigger role for the UN, especially the Security Council, including through the convening of an international conference on the Middle East question to rally more extensive international support for the Middle East peace process.

For a long time, China has been providing support and assistance to the Palestinian side within its capacity. In 2004, China provided RMB70 million worth of assistance of various kinds to Palestine.

In January 2005, at the invitation of the Palestinian side, China sent an observer mission to Palestine for the election of the Chairman of the Palestinian National Authority. Through exchanges with Palestinian officials at different levels, the Chinese side expressed clearly that China attached great importance and gave firm support to the Palestinian election. In March 2005, Deputy Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo attended the "London Conference on Supporting the Palestinian National Authority". At the Conference, he elaborated on China's policy on the Middle East question at present and reiterated the four-point proposition presented by State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan in his recent trip to Palestine and Israel.

2. China supports efforts towards establishing the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone

China has long been unconditionally committed to no use or threat of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon countries or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and has always supported the efforts of countries in various regions to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on a voluntary basis through consultation. In its statement upon accession to NPT in 1992, China made a solemn appeal that "nuclear-weapon states undertake to support propositions of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, respect the status of such zones and undertake corresponding obligations."

China holds that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is conducive to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and strengthening the international non-proliferation regime. Proliferation of nuclear weapons would be more dangerous in regions with tension. For this reason, China has unequivocally supported the Middle East countries in their efforts to establish the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone from the very start, believing that it would contribute to easing tension in the region and facilitating the settlement of the Middle East question.

China has been supporting the efforts in establishing the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone within the framework of the United Nations. Every year since 1974, the UN General Assembly has adopted the Egypt-sponsored resolution on the establishment of the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Egyptian President Mubarak has also put forth an initiative to

establish a Middle East WMD-Free Zone and appealed to all countries in the Middle East to make vigorous efforts and conduct serious negotiations to this end. China has consistently supported those resolutions and the initiative. China also supports the decision on the Middle East Question adopted by the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

China has actively promoted the establishment of the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone at the bilateral level. In high-level meetings with leaders of Middle East countries, China has time and again expressed its appreciation of their efforts towards establishing the nuclear-weapon-free zone, and has consistently maintained its unambiguous position supporting the establishment of such a zone.

In December 2003, Libya decided to abandon its WMD programmes, which included nuclear weapons. China took this decision favorably, believing that it would contribute to upholding the international non-proliferation regime as well as promoting peace and stability in the region. China also joins the international community in supporting a proper settlement of the Iran nuclear issue through dialogue within the framework of IAEA. To this end, China supports the ongoing negotiation between Iran and three EU members to work out a long-term settlement plan for the Iran nuclear issue. China believes that Israel's accession to NPT and acceptance of IAEA safeguards for all its nuclear facilities would be of great significance to achieving the goal of full accession by Middle East countries to NPT and reinforcing the international non-proliferation regime.

China is ready to work with the international community to make continued efforts for and contribution to the achievement of peace in the Middle East and the establishment of the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone at an early date.
