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

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

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

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/77/50.



I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 10 of its resolution 76/20 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region and other concerned States, in accordance with paragraph 7 of its resolution 46/30 and taking into account the evolving situation in the region. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of those States on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study annexed to the report of the Secretary-General of 10 October 1990 (A/45/435) or other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. In paragraph 11 of resolution 76/20, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its seventy-seventh session, a report on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. On 26 January 2022, the Office for Disarmament Affairs sent a note verbale to all Member States drawing their attention to paragraphs 10 and 11 of resolution 76/20 and seeking their views on the matter, with the deadline of 31 May 2022 for the submission of reports. Any views received after that deadline would be posted on the website of the Office (www.un.org/disarmament) in the language of submission. No addenda would be issued.

3. Replies were received from the Governments of Cuba, Israel, Mexico and Spain. The replies are reproduced in section III of the present report. A reply received from the European Union is reproduced in section IV, in accordance with the modalities set out in General Assembly resolution 65/276.

II. Observations

4. At the sixty-fifth regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), held in September 2021, members of the Group of Arab States reiterated a request to include an agenda item entitled “Israeli nuclear capabilities”. However, for the sixth consecutive year, the Group opted not to introduce a resolution under that item. The Group stated that all Arab States had acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and shown their continuing readiness to take practical steps towards the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The Group urged Israel to accede to the Treaty and to place all its nuclear facilities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system.¹ Israel stated that the continued inclusion of the agenda item served no purpose other than to politicize the discussions at the General Conference. It also stated that Israel had held a consistently constructive approach regarding the possibility of a direct regional security dialogue and that, during the past year, it had proved that direct dialogue and bilateral relations with other Governments in the region were still possible.²

5. At the meetings of the First Committee during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, held in October and November 2021, many Member States expressed support for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. They welcomed the political declaration and other outcomes of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle

¹ See explanatory memorandum submitted by the States members of the League of Arab States on Israeli nuclear capabilities, available at www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gc/gc65-1-add1.pdf.

² See communication received from the Permanent Representative of Israel regarding the request to include in the agenda of the Conference an item entitled “Israeli nuclear capabilities”, available at www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gc/gc65-15.pdf.

East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in New York from 18 to 22 November 2019. The Group of Arab States urged all parties invited to the Conference to join the process. Israel reiterated its objection to the Conference and stated that any regional security framework could only be the outcome of a mutual political desire of all regional parties to engage with one another, taking into consideration the security concerns of each and every State and reflecting arrangements freely arrived at by all concerned States.

6. The second session of the Conference was held in New York from 29 November to 3 December 2021, under the presidency of Kuwait. Nineteen members of the Conference from the region, four observer States³ and three relevant international organizations/entities⁴ participated in the session. The Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid (Maldives), spoke at the opening of the session. The Conference adopted its rules of procedure and established a working committee, open to all members of the Conference, to undertake intersessional work (see [A/CONF.236/2021/DEC.3](#)). It also agreed to include a summary of the thematic debate reflecting positions and views presented by participating States on key issues in its final report ([A/CONF.236/2021/4](#)) as a basis for future discussions.

7. The working committee of the Conference held its first meeting on 24 March 2022 to discuss organizational matters. The second meeting was held in New York from 7 to 9 June 2022, to consider several key issues relating to the Middle East zone treaty. The working committee will hold its third meeting in September 2022 to continue its deliberations, with inputs from experts in the relevant fields.

8. The third session of the Conference is scheduled to be held in New York in November 2022.

9. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) continued to examine the historical context of perspectives on and prospects for a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction through the convening of inclusive dialogues on such topics as nuclear energy, means of delivery and chemical and biological weapons in the context of such a zone. UNIDIR also convened a public panel discussion reflecting on the past and looking at the future of the zone. In addition, the Institute published a series of essays written by experts from the region entitled “Perspectives, drivers and objectives for the Middle East WMD-free zone: voices from the region” and a fact sheet entitled “Arab women in international security and disarmament”, available in both Arabic and English.

10. Progress in the Middle East peace process would contribute to the process of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In that connection, all parties concerned, inside and outside the region, should seek to achieve such progress. The United Nations remains ready to provide any assistance in that regard. In that context, the continued lack of prospects for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the growing impediments to the realization of the two-State solution are deeply concerning. The United Nations will continue to work towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions, an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the establishment of an independent, democratic, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with a secure Israel. It is only by realizing the vision of two States living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital

³ China, France, Russian Federation and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

⁴ International Atomic Energy Agency, Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit.

of Israel and Palestine, and all final status issues resolved permanently through negotiations, that the legitimate aspirations of both peoples will be achieved.

11. Since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General ([A/76/190 \(Part I\)](#)), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations have continued their efforts towards the full implementation of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. The use of chemical weapons with impunity and without accountability is a threat to international peace and security. It is, therefore, imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons.

III. Replies received from Governments

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[9 May 2022]

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are an important contribution to international efforts for the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner. We commend the efforts made, in accordance with the provisions of article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to establish such zones in all regions of the world.

Cuba is proud to belong to the first densely populated area in the world to be declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone, through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), which has been a political, legal and institutional benchmark for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions of the world. Those zones have been established through the adoption of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Treaty of Bangkok), the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba), the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia (Treaty of Semipalatinsk) and the declaration by Mongolia regarding its nuclear-weapon-free status.

The Latin American and Caribbean region has made a significant contribution to nuclear disarmament and to the maintenance of international peace and security, having been the first to be proclaimed a “zone of peace”, at the second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana in 2014.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are of great importance because they promote peace and stability at the regional and international levels by prohibiting the possession, acquisition, development, testing, manufacture, production, stockpiling, deployment and use of nuclear weapons. They represent a concrete legal achievement of the utmost importance in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. They must be respected by all States, without reservations or other limitations. Given their importance, the establishment of such regimes in the remaining regions must be actively promoted.

We reiterate the importance of the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In order for such a zone to be established, Israel must renounce its possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty without delay, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, and immediately place all its nuclear facilities under the safeguards system of the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in order to comply, without delay and without conditions, with the just demands of the international community. Until Israel accedes to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Governments concerned must stop assisting the nuclear programme of that country immediately, as such assistance is clearly contrary to the letter and spirit of the Treaty.

We note the holding of the most recent Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in November 2021.

It is regrettable that, despite the many resolutions and decisions adopted at the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and by the United Nations General Assembly and IAEA, the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East has not been achieved. Those resolutions and decisions remain valid until their objectives are achieved. One aspect that undermines confidence in the Non-Proliferation Treaty is the failure to implement commitments agreed to during the Review Conferences.

The resolution on the Middle East, adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, and the 2010 plan of action are two elements that will need to be given due attention in the run-up to the upcoming Review Conference if the credibility of this instrument is to be restored. It is crucial to reach a consensus that is beneficial for the parties and that restores confidence in the Treaty and in the nuclear disarmament regime in general.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, apart from being a major contribution to the achievement of the goal of nuclear disarmament, would be a momentous step forward in the peace process in that region.

Israel

[Original: English]
[23 May 2022]

The State of Israel reiterates its explanation of its vote on resolution [76/20](#), entitled “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East”, adopted by the General Assembly on 6 December 2021, made in the First Committee of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly (dated 27 October 2021).

It took a long time and considerable international efforts to reach past consensus on the draft resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

Even though Israel had its own deep reservations on the language and modalities of this resolution, which have been voiced every year in our explanation of position, Israel supported the resolution for the sake of the consensus, as Israel’s consistent approach was always constructive and consensus oriented.

It is very unfortunate that this long-standing practice was broken by the Arab Group. By imposing a new unilateral and destructive resolution in 2018 entitled “Convening a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction”, the Arab Group has altered the status quo and forced Israel to disassociate itself from the resolution in question.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[31 May 2022]

Mexico submits this document pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/20](#) entitled “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East”, in which the General Assembly requests the members of the United Nations to submit their views on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study on effective and verifiable measures which would facilitate the establishment of such a zone, prepared in 1990, as well as other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

Mexico reaffirms its unreserved support for efforts aimed at the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, through arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the respective region. It was one of the pioneering States that established the first such zone.

Fifty-five years after the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) was opened for signature in 1967, Mexico recalls that this Treaty established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area of the planet, which has been a legal, political and institutional benchmark for the creation of other nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this regard, Mexico wishes to emphasize that, as a region, Latin America and the Caribbean has been a pioneer with regard to the establishment of the prohibition of nuclear weapons under international law and also in its commitment to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mexico is convinced that nuclear-weapon-free zones are an effective measure that contributes to nuclear non-proliferation, since States parties undertake obligations not to develop, possess, acquire or use nuclear weapons, and to prevent the deployment on their territories of nuclear weapons belonging to another State. In addition, nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Militarily denuclearized zones are not an end in themselves, but an important intermediate step towards nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mexico believes that the promotion of the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is an integral part of the commitments under the agreement on the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1995, as well as the agreements of the 2000 and 2010 Treaty Review Conferences. The establishment of such a zone would help to reduce tensions in the region, while creating an atmosphere of stability and peace that could contribute to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons in the region.

In this regard, the Government of Mexico commends the efforts of the countries of the region of the Middle East to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone, within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Mexico welcomes the positive results of the first and second sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East, which were held from 18 to 22 November 2019 and from 29 November to 3 December 2021, respectively. The results and measures adopted are an endorsement of the will and commitment of the States of this region to advancing in the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-

free zone in the Middle East and to achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mexico urges all the States of the region to continue their active involvement in this process, taking an inclusive and transparent approach.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would be a major contribution to ensuring the peace and stability of the region and should be supported voluntarily and actively by all parties.

Mexico recognizes the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the Middle East. Mexico is also grateful for the academic and research work carried out by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in its examination of the historical context of, perspectives on and prospects for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Mexico recognizes the importance of dialogue and cooperation between nuclear-weapon-free zones. Mexico also hopes that a fourth Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia will be held soon.

In conclusion, Mexico reiterates its willingness to share its relevant experience and lessons learned, which could contribute to the efforts that the States of the Middle East are conducting in order to make progress towards achieving the goal of this General Assembly resolution.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[31 May 2022]

The foreign policy of Spain, in line with that of the European Union, is one of firm commitment to the multilateral non-proliferation system, with a clear ambition to ensure that the main treaties on the matter are universally accepted.

The ratification by Spain of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons entailed the recognition of its three fundamental pillars, namely, preventing additional States from acquiring or developing nuclear weapons, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and working towards nuclear disarmament. Consistent with the above, Spain supports, in general, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a path to total nuclear disarmament.

In that regard, the States Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty reaffirmed in 1995 and 2000 their conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in regions of tension, such as the Middle East, as well as the establishment of zones free of all types of weapons of mass destruction, should be promoted as a matter of priority, taking into account the characteristics of each region.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, which has been debated in the United Nations General Assembly since 1974, as well as in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has had the continuing support of Spain. That support was demonstrated during the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held in May 2015. At this Conference, subsidiary body 2, chaired by Spain, examined regional issues, including those related to the Middle East and the implementation of the 1995 resolution, and sought to reach an agreement on the convening of a conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, with the presence of all the countries of the region.

The support of Spain for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is currently channelled primarily through the European Union, which has undertaken significant promotion efforts. One of its main initiatives is Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/938 of 6 June 2019, which provides for a series of actions to promote a better understanding of the successes and failures of this process since its inception and the development of possible new proposals in this regard.

Spain is also a committed member of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament. The Initiative, in its working paper for the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons entitled “Stepping stones for advancing nuclear disarmament” ([NPT/CONF.2020/WP.6](#)), invites all States to support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned, including the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the resolution on the Middle East of the 1995 Review Conference.

Spain supported the holding, in November 2019, 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. The participation of Spain was motivated by the recognition that this is an issue of crucial importance for the peace and security of the region, and of the planet. Spain believes that, in order to achieve the objective of the Conference, diplomatic efforts must be inclusive. Spain also welcomed the holding of the second session of the Conference, in November 2021.

A dynamic of trust conducive to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East can only be created as part of a broader package that includes: (1) measures to de-escalate ongoing conflicts, many of which are being conducted through third parties; (2) measures to build trust and transparency at the regional level; (3) reinforcement of the entire disarmament and non-proliferation architecture in the region, including:

- Universalization of and full compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction in the region.
- The signing by all States in the region of IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols, in their most advanced versions.
- Universalization of and full compliance with other instruments related to conventional weapons and ballistic missiles (such as the conventions on anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and certain conventional weapons; the Arms Trade Treaty; the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation; etc.).

Other issues to be considered in the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone include the following:

- The ultimate goal should be the signing of a treaty, involving all States in the region, that establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone, its verification system and related confidence- and security-building measures.
- Its geographical scope should be freely decided upon by the States of the zone, with the intention of making the treaty as broad as possible and permitting a degree of progressive enlargement of the zone. It does not seem appropriate to include international waters in the nuclear-weapon-free zone, since they are

governed by different legal regimes; rather, only States and their territorial waters should be included.

- The confidence- and security-building measures to be negotiated should be based on the principles of specificity, transparency, verifiability, reciprocity, voluntariness, progressivity and complementarity. They should not be strictly focused on compliance with and verification of the nuclear-weapon-free zone, but should have the overall objective of reducing tension in the zone, by fostering mutual trust, transparency and predictability, and thus reducing the likelihood of confrontation between States.
- The international community's support for the process is fundamental, both in the design and development of the framework agreed and in the monitoring of its implementation. Therefore, the international community, and especially the major Powers, should establish a system of guarantees to safeguard the security of the States that are part of the nuclear-weapon-free zone and, at the same time, dissuade them from having recourse to nuclear proliferation.

The expectations generated from 2015 as a result of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme, signed by the Security Council, which aims to ensure the strictly civilian nature of the programme, were severely affected by the withdrawal of the United States of America from the agreement and the increasing incidences of non-compliance by Iran. The diplomatic démarches undertaken in April 2021, in which the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security plays a central role, are grounds for the hope that the validity and effectiveness of the Agreement can be restored. This is crucial to increasing stability in the region and fostering between actors the trust necessary for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

In conclusion, Spain will remain committed to the goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which will inevitably involve a complex diplomatic process in which the political will of the actors of the region and the constructive involvement of the major Powers, including the European Union, will be fundamental pillars.

IV. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]
[31 May 2022]

The 2016 Global Strategy for the Union's Foreign and Security Policy as well as the 2003 European Union Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction are founded on the conviction that a multilateral approach to security, including disarmament and non-proliferation, provides the best way to maintain international order.

The Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean of 13 July 2008, establishing the Union for the Mediterranean, reaffirmed the common aspiration to achieve peace as well as regional security, as set out in the Barcelona Declaration, adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, of 27–28 November 1995. The Barcelona Declaration promotes regional security through, *inter alia*, nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation, adherence to regional arrangements such as zones free of nuclear weapons, including their verification regimes, as well as by fulfilling in good faith the commitments of the signatories to the Barcelona Declaration under arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation conventions.

The parties to the Union for the Mediterranean agreed to pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and to consider practical steps, such as the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as the excessive accumulation of conventional arms.

The European Union reiterates its full support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which has laid the foundation for establishing nuclear-free zones around the world as well as the establishment of a Middle East weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone.

The European Union remains committed to the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The European Union continues to strongly support the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference on the Middle East and reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, as agreed by the Non-Proliferation Treaty States parties. The path for action as set out in the 2010 Action Plan remains the most promising basis on which to proceed.

The European Union is of the view that, as stated in the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan, such zones can only be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at between all States of the region concerned. The European Union maintains the view that dialogue and building confidence among stakeholders is the only sustainable way to agree on arrangements for a meaningful conference, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them, as decided by the 2010 Review Conference. The process must be inclusive for it to be effective and proposals that force the issue risk failure.

The European Union has consistently presented this position at the United Nations, as was also the case in recent United Nations discussions related to concrete proposals on how to take the process forward. The European Union reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, presented on 24 May 2018, which pledges to work with States Members of the United Nations to strengthen and consolidate nuclear-weapon-free zones, including by supporting the further establishment of such zones, including in the Middle East. The European Union takes note of the first sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, and is encouraged by their outcomes. The European Union calls upon all parties to further their efforts to build an inclusive and consensus-based process, including all States of the region, taking into account the security concerns of all these States, and covering all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, in line with the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the 2010 Review Conference outcome.

The European Union reconfirms its readiness to assist the process leading to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as it has done in the past by facilitating dialogue among States of the region. Several specific legislative acts, European Union Council decisions, have been adopted by the European Union to support the United Nations work in this regard. The following Council decisions supporting various projects and activities supporting the process are still ongoing:

- Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/809 currently supports the implementation of Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), where assistance requests from States to take additional, practical steps to implement the obligations of resolution

1540 (2004) at the national level give priority to States from, inter alia, the Gulf and Middle East region.

- Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/615, of 15 April 2019, in support of activities leading up to the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/938, of 6 June 2019, in support of a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. This Council decision supports European Union efforts to bring the process forward, as the European Union also did in 2011 and in 2012, respectively. It aims to enhance confidence-building through a number of seminars, workshops and research projects, whose objective is to reach a deeper collective understanding of the successes and failures related to previous efforts, and which would eventually allow for ideas on new avenues and proposals leading to a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.
- Furthermore, Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/538, of 1 April 2019, supports key activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, including the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the implementation of the decision of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention at its fourth special session on addressing the threat from chemical weapons use (C-SS-4/DEC.3), adopted on 27 June 2018.

The European Union also confirms its readiness to continue to assist the Middle East region via the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centers of Excellence Initiative, which was launched in response to the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of countries outside the European Union to mitigate chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks. The Centres of Excellence established in Jordan, Algeria, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates all contribute to enhanced capacity-building in the region.

The European Union continues to call upon all States in the region that have not yet done so to accede to and abide by the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement, the Additional Protocol and, as applicable, a modified small quantities protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Also, subscription to The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation could contribute to regional confidence-building, which is necessary for progress towards a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.