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## **OBSERVATIONS ON A WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION FREE ZONE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

First, allow me to thank the organisers of this conference, Bill Potter and Elena Sokova in particular, for the opportunity to present to such a distinguished gathering. I have been asked to say a few words about verification challenges in the Middle East. I will constrain myself to the conference questions outlined in the agenda.

My first experience with monitoring was in the early 1990s the Middle East. As a young man, I served with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). This peacekeeping force was established in 1978 for an interim time. I cannot help to observe that the interim period has lasted for almost four decades. Things take time in the Eastern Mediterranean. There is no reason to think that a zone banning weapons of mass destruction throughout the region will become reality anytime soon. One day, perhaps, the states of the region will see the benefits of ridding their lands from these indiscriminate weapons. When that decision is taken, us verification thinkers will be called up to supply knowledge and ideas as to how this new reality can be verified. Therefore, there is a case to continually keep the verification discussion going, to retain knowledge, and to improve on our ideas, until the day the zone comes into focus.

UNIFIL is obviously a United Nations mission. It is multilateral. I for one believe that the key to many of today's questions lies in multilateralism. You see, one great strength of UNIFIL is that all parties dislike it. The Israelis feel the force protects Hezbollah, and Hezbollah feels the force protect the Israelis. Yet, the United Nations played, and continues to play, an important role in monitoring that conflict—and has prevented more than one incident from becoming serious. I have seen this with my own eyes.

These are the benefits of multilateralism. These organisations are perhaps imperfect, and they are expensive for sure. However, they are professional, relatively well resourced, and more often than not carries out their tasks in an objective fashion. I would therefore like to explore how the existing multilateral framework can be applied to the zone.

The first questions posed by the organisers of this conference were: *"What are the verification requirements for the nuclear component of the future zone? Is a regional verification body necessary? How would it interact with the IAEA?"*

It is difficult to say now what the verification requirements are for the nuclear component of the zone. It depends to a great degree of how state parties would want to deal with suspected nuclear weapons

programmes of the region—and a lot of focus is of course on Israel. Israel's nuclear arsenal has never been confirmed or acknowledged, it is widely assumed that she has one.

There are two principal ways in which Israel can verifiably disarm.

One option is for Israel to dismantle its nuclear weapons before joining the zone. If so, the verification mission would be similar to that conducted in South Africa in the 1990s. Israel would declare a large amount of weapons usable material, and the International Atomic Energy Agency would assess whether this declaration is *correct and complete*. Disarmament becomes a safeguards problem. And here baselines will matter. There will be doubts that all materials that should have been declared has, in fact, been declared. Israel would need to supply a wealth of information on its past material production. In South Africa, where material accountancy standards did not conform with the Agency's own, the IAEA had to retrospectively piece together the production history month by month. At the end of this process, some uncertainty still remained.

Having Israel sign up to a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with an Additional Protocol will greatly aid the task. It will perhaps be crucial. Israel could join the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty before so doing, but it is strictly not necessary. Safeguards agreements are concluded separately with the Agency.

A fully accepted and implemented IAEA State Level Concept (SLC) will also be important for the Agency's mission. This concept aids the Agency in drawing conclusions on the state as a whole. By doing so, it confirms that all nuclear material has been declared, and that they are in peaceful use. Since you cannot build a nuclear device without nuclear material, the conclusion in effect confirms that the country remains in a disarmed state. Hence, the SLC is one of the few bridges there are between safeguards and non-proliferation. In my opinion, it is therefore obvious that the SLC should apply to all states, not only non-nuclear weapon states. The debate we have had in Vienna over the last year is both concerning and counterproductive.

It goes without saying that Iran is a litmus test too—Iran's cooperation with the Agency, and its attitude towards safeguards implementation, has been problematic at best. One cannot expect Israel to accept safeguards that appear unpalatable to others in the region. The same can be said about the attitude of many other countries in the region. There needs to be greater acceptance of the fact that nuclear safeguards are the substructure on which the entire disarmament construct rests.

Another option is for Israel to dismantle its weapons under supervision. This will require the development of a new set of protocols applicable to the mission. In particular, dismantlement would need to be made in a way that prevents the dissemination of proliferative information, while at the same time providing the inspectorate with enough information to make a compliance assessment. By observing the destruction of each and every weapon, Israel's neighbours may become more confident about the state of her disarmament.

Observing the destruction of weapons, however, does not solve the questions I posed earlier. In both cases, completeness will be very difficult to determine with absolute certainty. This was the case in South Africa, where Agency measurement campaigns were not aligned with western intelligence assessments. In South Africa, measurements of the tails from the shutdown enrichment programme are still continuing—more

than 20 years later. Observing warhead destruction could perhaps alleviate this *residual uncertainty*, but this is by no means certain.

I note that the Agency is very likely to have a role in both scenarios. It is instructive to note that the African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty also envisions a role for the IAEA in verifying the processes of dismantling and destruction of the nuclear explosive devices, as well as the destruction or conversion of the facilities for their production (see art. VI).

The second set of questions posed by the organisers was: *"What are verification options for the chemical and biological components? Is relying on the the OPCW regime going to be sufficient? How can regional states approach verification in the bioweapons sphere?"*

I believe that OPCW is well equipped to fulfil its mandate in the Middle East, but as so many other things its subject to member state funding and support. The art of chemical weapons destruction has progressed considerably since the days of the first Iraq War, and the experience of UNSCOM. Since its founding, the organisation has developed considerable experience in verifying the destruction of chemical weapons, and it would make sense to allow it to perform this task under a WMDFZ as well. Once all chemical weapons have been verifiably destroyed, the organisation should also be allowed to verify—through industry inspections—that these weapons do not re-emerge.

State parties to the Biological Weapons Convention have been unable to reach consensus on whether a ban on biological weapons can be verified. It should be recalled that both UNSCOM and UNMOVIC managed to do this in the context of Iraq. While verifying a ban on biological weapons is challenging, it is by no means impossible. In my mind, moreover, there is embryonic expertise on the multilateral level that could be applied in the future.

A week ago or so, VERTIC hosted a verification conference in Wilton Park. There, we heard from Åke Sällström about the United Nations' inspection activities in Syria. He mentioned that the World Health Organisation (WHO) had been brought in under the UN Secretary-General's investigatory mechanism in 2007. He was unprepared, however, by the wealth of expertise and experience that the WHO could bring to bear on the problem. I do not think I would have been. Personally, I'm convinced that the WHO, who already does biological safety and security, is uniquely well placed to handle verification too. Institutional changes are necessary, no doubt, but its better than attempting to set up a new organisation.

The third set of questions posed by the organisers was: *"Does the future zone need a regional verification body for all three components (nuclear, biological, and chemical)? What are the options in this regard? How will it be staffed?"*

I do not believe that a WMDFZ needs a verification body per se (with the possible exception of BWC), but it could benefit from a compliance mechanism. This has been foreseen by the African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty, which has a similar mechanism set up in the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (see article 12 of the Treaty).

Another thing that can be considered is an organisation designed to share nuclear expertise, and promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy throughout the region. This is something that has been discussed in the past, and continues to be discussed today.

The fourth set of questions posed by the organisers were: *"How would the delivery system aspect of the mandated zone be verified and by whom? Which kinds of delivery systems are verifiable?"*

The answer to these questions depends on what is meant by delivery systems, and the nature of the weapon the system is carrying. It is a difference looking at the deployment of air wings, and the deployment of short-, intermediate- and intercontinental range ballistic missiles. The United States have been running a project with non-governmental researchers in India and Pakistan on the verified dismantlement of short range ballistic missile systems. This can be done.

Problems start to arise when you are trying to monitor intended use of ballistic missile systems. It is common in South Asia to hear the argument that short range systems should be reused for delivery of conventional warheads. This is problematic if an unscheduled launch is detected, if the flight time is measured in 10-15 minutes, and if you have no way of knowing what sits on top of the missile.

The easiest way to control missiles is to verifiably retire entire classes of weapons, and then introduce technical means to monitor scheduled launches of allowed systems. Easier still is to introduce a blanket ban. I doubt, however, that there is much appetite for that at the moment.

The final questions posed by the organisers was: *"What are the human and technical capabilities necessary for verifying the zone if done by regional states/organizations?"*

As I said before, the zone could benefit from a Secretariat. The benefits of establishing an organisation tasked with verification is not entirely clear. It again depends on the level of ambition. It would appear to be a sound strategy to draw on existing structures—the IAEA, the CTBTO, the ISU, the OPCW, and the WHO—instead of setting up yet another regional body. I always view regional bodies with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I can see the benefits that they have in promoting exclusively regional confidence, but on the other hand I think that the duplication can lead to conflict among the verification organisations and overlap. It is also not the best use of limited resources.

I thank you for your kind attention.