STATEMENT
by the delegation of the Russian Federation
at the second session of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty
on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
on the Middle East
Geneva, May 2, 2003

Mr. Chairman,

The Middle East situation remains very complicated and tense. The military actions in Iraq could not but affect negatively regional security and stability, brought about serious humanitarian crisis the consequences of which are yet to be overcome.

The appraisal of the Russian side regarding what happened in Iraq has not changed. We have been and still are against using force in resolving serious international problems, we are resolutely in favor of the search for political settlement of crisis situations on the basis of international law and the UN Charter. We are convinced that the processes of the postwar settlement and arrangements in Iraq should take place within the UN frameworks with the key role played by the UN Security Council. The emphasis should be made on the respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq.

In this context final clarification of issues pertaining to the Iraqi WMD is of special importance. We welcome the IAEA readiness to resume its activities in Iraq with intent to fulfill completely the Agency's mandate and present a final report to the UN Security Council. We believe that as soon as it becomes possible, the international inspectors should return to Iraq. A unique technical and expert potential at their disposal should be engaged to the full extent. It is quite obvious that it is IAEA that is called upon to draw the final line under the nuclear file of Iraq.
Speaking about the resulting situation in the Middle East region one cannot but note some positive changes. For example, Palestinian reforms are gaining strength – a new Palestinian government has been formed and legislatively approved. The way is opened to put in action, as soon as possible, the “road map” aimed at removal of mutual concerns of the parties and overcoming Palestine-Israel confrontation.

At the same time the fact that so far it has still been impossible to go ahead with the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, implement relevant resolutions adopted at the 1995 and 2000 Conferences is a matter of concern. In conditions of the present complicated military and political situation in the region, in our view the priority attention should be given to the issues of strengthening there of international non-proliferation regime. The efforts aimed at the removal of still existing obstacles against the establishment of the nuclear-free zone in the Middle East should be intensified. In this connection we call on Israel to demonstrate political will and change its negative position regarding the NPT. Both, the states of the region as well as the whole international community expect Israel take specific steps testifying to its readiness to accede to the NPT and put all its nuclear activities under the IAEA control.

We are convinced that the UN and IAEA can make a constructive contribution into promoting the process of establishment of the nuclear-free zone in the Middle East. A predominant majority of states of the region is interested in it.

In conclusion we would like to underscore that as never before today the Middle East needs to get out of, as soon as possible, the vicious circle of violence and confrontation, form an entirely new regional climate based on mutual trust, stability and security. The international non-proliferation regime based on the NPT is an integral element of this structure.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.