STATEMENT
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at the discussion on convening the Conference on the establishment of a
Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass
destruction and their means of delivery
at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties
to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Geneva, 29 April 2013
Allow me to express my gratitude to the Facilitator of convening of the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery for his report and his close cooperation with Russia and the other three co-conveners of the Conference. In the year and a half since Ambassador Jaakko Laajava was appointed, we have all had the opportunity to see that he is the perfect figure to deal with this highly responsible, difficult and delicate task. Our experience in working with Mr. Laajava and his team allows us to say with confidence that they are fully committed to performing their mandate and are making every effort in this regard. The fact that we have not achieved the desired results is not their fault.

We would like to reaffirm all the assessments as to the postponement of the Conference that the Russian delegation provided last week. The current situation arouses deep concern and worries. The continuing uncertainty regarding the convening of the Conference is contrary to the interests of strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. All states, whether a party to the NPT or not, must realize this.

Is there still a chance to get back on the positive track? We strongly believe so. We need to seek a solution on the basis of the 2010 Action Plan in combination with creative approaches and willingness to look for reasonable and compromises acceptable to all.

Russia believes that we must first of all decide upon the new date for convening the Conference, which would let us work according to a plan. In our view, it could be convened in the second half of December 2013, around the same time that Finland as the host country set as a preliminary date last year.

In order to make this a reality, it is necessary to engage in multilateral consultations with the participation of all States of the Middle East without delay, as the Facilitator suggests. We see no alternative to such preparatory activities. Russia emphasized the importance of shifting the preparation process of the Conference to a multilateral format almost one year ago, when it became
absolutely clear that bilateral contacts alone were not enough. Unfortunately, we did not come to an agreement back then. But we should do this at least now. Otherwise the current situation might deteriorate.

It should be absolutely clear: the proposed consultations do not at all substitute the idea of convening the Conference. Their goal is to ensure promptly the appropriate preparation for this Conference.

The discussions should focus on the Conference modalities, its rules of procedure and agenda. The Facilitator has developed in close cooperation with the co-conveners his corresponding considerations. In September last year, the League of Arab States also provided its detailed understandings. We should sit together and elaborate a consensus approach.

We believe that apart from the abovementioned questions it would be reasonable to start the discussions of a final document of the Conference in the course of consultations. It would help to ensure the necessary predictability and make a realistic forecast of its optimum outcomes.

It can be expected that to reach a consensus, we shall need not one but two, three or even more meetings. It is normal, taking into account the complexity and sensitivity of the issues under discussion. However, the consultations cannot last forever. We should get down to them immediately and construct our work in such a way as to complete it by all means at the latest by the beginning of December.

The outcome will definitely depend on the attitude of delegations to the further process. We are convinced that it is necessary, as far as possible, to put off emotions, abandon mutual claims, and to focus instead on business-like discussions of specific issues in the spirit of pragmatism.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we would like to note that the Middle East issue received the strongest resonance at the second session of our Committee. We believe that it was useful and timely to remind to all that the relevant decisions of the 2010 NPT Review Conference remain in force and should be implemented without further delays.
Numerous contacts on the margins of the session, in our view, guided us slightly forward in the right direction. The results, let's have it straight, are far from being consensus-like but they have to be thoroughly comprehended to be followed up without dangerous stagnation. On our part, we shall closely cooperate with all the parties concerned to come, as soon as possible, to specific, mutually acceptable results and to convening the Conference till the end of this year.