IRELAND

Cluster 2 – Regional Issues
The Middle East Zone
Statement by

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at the

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Thank you Mr Chairman,

While the NPT is of course crucial to the non-proliferation architecture, it would be a mistake to view it solely as a non-proliferation instrument. It is more complex and even more significant than that. Under this Cluster, I would therefore like to make a number of points about the commitment to the creation of a zone free weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East which we believe needs to be accorded greater priority and more consistent attention.

In this regard, my Delegation notes that everything in the NPT is connected. Without the three pillars and in particular without Article VI, we would not have had an agreement on a treaty at all and without the commitments to a programme of action on disarmament, to a Middle East zone and to an enhanced Review process, we would not have had agreement on the indefinite extension in 1995. So, as we approach this Treaty’s fiftieth anniversary, now is not the time to attempt a selective approach. By this Treaty, and by all of these interconnected commitments, we are bound - to a shared vision, a shared objective and a shared responsibility, including on the Middle East zone.

I would like to reiterate my delegation’s support for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, with a path for action as set out in 2010. The 2010 agreement, while regrettably not yet realised, remains the platform on which to build and we should not lose sight of the valuable preliminary work which was undertaken by the Facilitator and his team. This material and these efforts should not be lost.

We also have much to learn from the positive experiences of the existing Nuclear Weapons Free Zones and from the positive example of the JCPOA with Iran, which demonstrated what is possible with genuine multilateral diplomacy and commitment
to conclude an effective negotiation. It is clear that the use of weapons of mass
destruction, be they chemical, biological or nuclear, with their indiscriminate impact
on civilians, has no place anywhere in our world and their toxic presence lends
nothing to already fragile, tense and complex regional relationships.

While we acknowledge the special responsibility of the Co-Convenors and the states
of the region, we believe that, as NPT states parties who have made a commitment,
we all have a role to play and a duty to offer whatever support we can. In this regard,
my Delegation is concerned that the current format of the NPT Review Cycle may not
best serve the challenges posed by the Zone issue. We believe that it is important to
maintain momentum. It will not be sufficient to wait until the 2020 Review
Conference and simply hope that something will have happened; we all need to help
to make that something happen. It is not enough to repeatedly reiterate
commitments; we must do something to affect their implementation.

We believe the time is right for a new “food for thought” paper to be prepared,
based on the 2010 Action Plan. This could be developed jointly, perhaps by experts
from one or all of the Co Convenors, together with experts from the Region, followed
by a forum to discuss. This would not in any way be as a substitute for the
Conference which would remain our objective. Rather it would be a means of re-
opening, continuing and refreshing the necessary dialogue and stimulating broad
engagement on the range of issues.

After all, the more challenging the issue, the more dialogue is needed and if we are
going to have the Conference, then we are going to need some preparatory
processes in the run up to it. This is the nature of all negotiations. We therefore
welcome the very useful seminars organised by the Co Convenors in 2015 and 2016
and hope that more such meetings can be arranged in order to keep this issue to the
forefront of our attention and concern.
We also believe that, given the breadth and complexity of the issue, it would be helpful to have a dedicated and consistent resource that could ensure engagement, focus, momentum and continuity is maintained throughout the Review Cycle from now until the 2020 Review Conference. This should include documentation to be considered by a wide group of experts and officials. The assignment of such resources, both human and otherwise, would be a matter for the UN and the UN Secretary General to decide but my delegation is happy to be supportive of any decision which invests greater attention in and accords the necessary priority to this issue.

The reality is that this process needs restarting and some creativity is going to be required to overcome the challenges that were experienced in the previous efforts by the Facilitator and his team. What we do need to remember is that, despite the differing perspectives on that last round, everyone did gather around the table and some, albeit limited, progress was possible.

We therefore look forward to playing what role we can, together with others, in making renewed progress on the Middle East Zone, as well as on the many other inter-related issues, during the current Review Cycle.

Thank you

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