



United Kingdom  
Mission to the  
United Nations

**Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear  
Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction 2019**

**General Debate Statement**

**by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

The United Kingdom would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Her Excellency the Permanent Representative of Jordan on assuming the role of President of the Conference, and extend thanks to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her work in support of this important event.

The United Kingdom remains committed the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, in line with the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East.

We fully recognise our responsibilities as a co-Sponsor of that resolution. The UK is ready to support actively and facilitate renewed regional dialogue with and among all States of the region, in a format that is inclusive, balanced, consensus-based and result orientated.

We remain disappointed that the Decision of the UN General Assembly that led to the creation of this Conference was tabled by the Arab Group without the support of all States of the region. The Guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones adopted by the UN Disarmament Commission in 1999 underline that such zones must be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the

States of the region concerned, and that initiatives to pursue such zones must be pursued by *all* the States of that region. These principles are reaffirmed in the endorsement by the 2010 NPT Review Conference of the convening of a Conference in 2012. It was on this basis – that the essential conditions of inclusivity and dialogue were not met – that the UK abstained on the 2018 Decision.

The continued lack of consensus is greatly concerning and, unless it is resolved, it will impede the effectiveness of this initiative. To make progress, there needs to be a dialogue in which all states of the region feel they are able to participate and their security concerns will be heard. To that end, the UK urges all relevant stakeholders, especially those here today, to make renewed, good faith consultations, with all relevant parties, in order to bring this issue back to consensus.

If this process is to be credible, it cannot be used to single out and isolate one state.

We are thus disappointed about the choice of remarks made by some participants today but pleased by the stated intention of the majority of parties here, to tackle all types of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

Madam President,

The UK is deeply concerned by the regional security situation today.

Confirmed use of chemical weapons in the conflict in Syria is deeply concerning. It is essential that Syria implements the provisions of CWC; fully cooperates with the OPCW and adheres to its obligations under UN resolutions. Chemical weapons use is completely unacceptable and there will never be impunity for such use.

We also take this opportunity to strongly urge Syria to return to full compliance with its safeguards obligations, and cooperate with the IAEA in connection with all unresolved issues. Syria's long-standing non-compliance with its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement grows ever more serious with time.

We are extremely concerned by Iran's reductions in compliance with the JCPoA. Iran's most recent actions have been significant and are eroding the core non-proliferation benefits of the deal. As E3 leaders said in their 23 September statement, "the time has come for Iran to accept negotiation on a long-term

framework for its nuclear programme as well as on the issues related to regional security, including its missile programme and other means of delivery”.

We hope that through constructive discussions that take into account regional security over the next few days, we can start to make some progress. We continue to advocate strongly for the universalisation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and call on those who have not yet ratified, to do so at their earliest opportunity. IAEA safeguards are the primary tool for preventing proliferation; an Additional Protocol remains the gold standard of safeguards agreements and we encourage all states to meet this standard. We also call on all Annex II states to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which is a vital part of the international security architecture. We call on states who have not yet done so to ratify and fully implement the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxins Weapon Convention; and for all states to adhere to the MTCR guidelines and principles on ballistic missiles, which restrict the proliferation of systems and associated technology, for the delivery of WMD. Such ratifications would bring greater confidence to the region and support discussions about a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone.

Madam President,

The UK looks forward to engaging in constructive discussions with all stakeholders over the next few days. It will be particularly important to ensure that any outcomes of this Conference do not preclude other relevant stakeholders from joining this process at a later stage. We also hope that this process will contribute towards setting the atmosphere for a successful NPT Review Conference in May next year.