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**SECOND PLENARY SESSION
NON-PROLIFERATION AND SECURITY
IN THE MIDDLE EAST
SATURDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2012**

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
Chairman of the Board,
King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies

Camille Grand, Director, Fondation Pour la Recherche Stratégique

Welcome to the second plenary session of this conference. I am Camille Grand, Director of the Foundation for Strategic Research and Chairman of the EU Consortium. We felt it was very useful to have a plenary session dedicated to the Middle East, because we have a very good and interesting group of speakers, who, I hope, will enlighten us. This topic is very dear to the heart of the Consortium because, in a way, this is how we started operating last year in terms of being in charge of the EU conference dealing with the issue of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. For some of us – and for some of you, I assume – this is where we first saw the consortium kick off meetings with the first big events. This is a topic that we continue to work on. We also believe, of course, as was made clear in yesterday's NPT session, that it is a very important topic in thinking about the nuclear non-proliferation regime as a whole.

Without further ado, and with the difficult task, dear Mark, of having the shortest session and the largest number of speakers, let me turn to our speakers and proceed as per the order. I will not, in line with my predecessors, go into the numerous titles and functions – you have our speakers' bios. Let me start with HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal, whom we are extremely happy to welcome to this event. We very much look forward to his remarks.

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

Good morning. *Bismillahir rahmanir rahim*. Ladies and gentlemen, when I came here I did not think that I would feel so cold, seeing as how high temperatures are all over the world. Nonetheless, it is a pleasure and privilege to be here. I thank the Non-Proliferation Consortium and the IISS for inviting me, and Dr Fitzpatrick and John Chipman, whom I do not see here.

I was privileged in 2008 to be a member of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament that was established by Australia and Japan, and which you know about already. It was established, of course, to look at the various aspects of non-proliferation and disarmament; therefore, the recommendations that it raised to the NPT review conference had some results to them, which were effective. One of those results was the decision to have a conference this year in Helsinki on a zone free of WMD in the Middle East.

My colleagues and I worked for a year on tackling the aspects of this issue, and consulted experts like you from North and South America, North, South, and East Asia, Europe, Australia and the Middle East. We worked with representatives of governments, the global nuclear-power industry and non-governmental organisations devoted to the cause of disarmament, and those responsible for advancing and monitoring nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The report made the case loud and clear that:

Nuclear weapons are the only weapons ever invented that have the capacity to wholly destroy life on this planet, and the arsenals we now possess are able to do so many times over. The problem with nuclear weapons is at least equal to that of climate change in terms of gravity – and much more immediate in its potential impact. So long as any state has nuclear weapons, others will want them. So long as such weapons remain, it defies credibility that they will not one day be used – by accident, miscalculation or design. And any such use would be catastrophic.

That was part of the report. This statement by itself delegitimises nuclear weapons and is a case for their abolition, and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 1996 ruled that 'the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law'. My focus here is not to detail the report, but its findings and recommendations are enduring: to achieve

the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons and to create an international consensus for the need to progress in this issue. It is relevant to your deliberations at this conference.

In reference to the Middle East, as I said, the report gave strong support to the establishment and development of a zone free of WMD, in accordance with the agreement on a resolution at the 1995 NPT review conference, calling for practical steps to be taken towards the establishment of such a zone. These zones generally prohibit the testing, stationing, development and use of nuclear weapons within a designated territory, and include protocols by which nuclear-weapon states can renounce the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons against states included in the zones.

The Commission strongly encouraged all NPT nuclear-weapon-state members to sign and ratify the protocols for all the zones and, similarly, all the other nuclear-armed states – so long as they remain outside the NPT – to issue stand-alone negative security assurances for each of them. The Commission stated that the zones have made, and continue to make, a very important contribution to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and not the least of their roles is helping to build and consolidate the normative constraints against nuclear weapons.

As you all know, ladies and gentlemen, Arab states, including my country, have embraced such a zone and establishing it is the official nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy of all Arab states. I have not seen any public commitment by Israel in support of the zone. Iran, while paying lip service to the zone, is more committed to pursuing enrichment of uranium and other suspicious activities that raise doubts about their commitment to the zone, which will compel other countries in the area to pursue policies that could lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences. Indeed, the best way toward peace in our region is for all nations – but most importantly Iran and Israel – to support the establishment of a zone free of WMD.

Ironically, this is actually a concept that the Iranian government itself had approved of before. Quite often from the early 1970s and 1980s, Iran joined with Egypt and other nations to work through the UN to attempt to gain support for what was then called a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This led then Egyptian President Mubarak to propose a resolution calling upon all states in the Middle East to take practical steps towards ‘the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of WMD, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems.’

Yet, despite all these efforts, our region can hardly be called free of WMD. Indeed, the Middle East is the most militarised region in the world today, largely due to the many conflicts that have raged and still rage in the area. While soldiers, tanks and planes have been growing in number in the area, the Iraq-Iran War, from 1980 to 1988, and the second Gulf War of 1991, increased the danger of proliferation of WMD in the region, as well as ballistic missiles capable of carrying them. States seek WMD for various reasons, including deterrence, arms races with neighbours, the ability to attack or project the ability to attack, or to spare the high cost of conventional weapons. The first nation in the region to acquire nuclear capability was Israel. One can follow this tragic arc right up to last year when the IAEA announced that it had found incontrovertible evidence of Iran working to develop nuclear weapons.

Saudi Arabia firmly believes that it is in every nation’s interest, including Israel’s and Iran’s, that they do not possess nuclear weapons. This is why, through various initiatives, we are sending messages to Iran that it is their right, as it is any nation’s right, and as we ourselves are doing, to develop a civilian programme for nuclear energy, but that trying to parlay that programme into nuclear weapons is a dead end, and that wiser choices will result in wider riches. A zone free of WMD is the best means to get Iran and Israel to give up nuclear weapons.

Such a zone must be accompanied by a rewards regime that provides economic and technical support for countries that join, plus a nuclear-security umbrella guaranteed by the permanent members of the Security Council. It should include a sanctions regime that puts economic and political sanctions on countries that do not join, plus military sanctions against those countries that try to develop WMD, also guaranteed by the permanent members of the Security Council.

Barring the current Iranian regime's support for a zone free of WMD, the IAEA report on Iranian nuclear capabilities is disturbing. I agree, however, with those in the international community who possess the blessed wisdom to know that military strikes would be entirely counterproductive. Indeed, it is important to remember that there are other non-military policy alternatives, as yet unexplored, that could have the desired result without the unwanted consequences.

The same thing can be said about Israeli nuclear weapons despite the Israeli denial policy and its excuses of not having the regional peace that responds to its own interests and ambitions in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As we have recently seen, Israel's unwillingness to cease its unlawful colonisation and continued refusal to grant the Palestinians their own homeland is the core reason that this conflict continues. There is no lack of proposals for peace, many of them completely rational and fair. Indeed, the only viable one today remains the Arab Peace Initiative, originally outlined by King Abdullah in 2002. It calls on Israel to withdraw to its 1967 borders and for the establishment of a viable and contiguous Palestine, with its capital in East Jerusalem, and bordering Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. The issue of refugees will be settled through mutual agreement. We urge Israel to take the necessary steps towards peace and justice. With peace, Israel will no longer have the excuse to own and deploy all WMD, including their nuclear arsenal.

Our region is beset by a number of great challenges but, in the end, these challenges can be met by the very principle that recognised the reality of Israel's nuclear weapons and guided the IAEA to investigate and then announce the truth behind Iran's nuclear programme. That, ladies and gentlemen, is the principle of openness.

If you will allow me a slight stretch of my poetic faculties, I would say that openness is indeed at the heart of many of the issues facing the region. Is it not openness that Iran fears, lest its true nuclear ambitions be discovered? Is it not openness that Israel fears, lest its true possession of nuclear weapons be known? Let us therefore embrace openness and join together for the good of all, especially in the establishment of a zone free of WMD in the Middle East. The time is now. The threat is clear. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Let us drop our differences and find mutual benefit in waging peace, for ourselves, for our nations, and for our children. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Camille Grand

Thank you very much for that excellent presentation that really puts us right into the debate. I take the point about openness as extremely important. Let me now turn to Bernd Kubbig, Project Director at PRIF, and also, as I discovered, coordinator of the Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East.