

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

**THE EU NON-PROLIFERATION AND
DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE
BRUSSELS
3-4 FEBRUARY 2012**

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

Sameh Aboul-Enein

Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt;
Assistant Professor for
Security and Disarmament Studies,
American University Cairo

Camille Grand

Bernd, thank you for placing emphasis on the issue of missiles, which are, indeed, very central in this process and in the region. Very often, the missile race is the tip of the iceberg in WMD programmes, so a lot of attention should be paid to this. Let me now turn to the next speaker, Sameh Aboul-Enein, who is the Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister of Egypt as well as Professor of Disarmament and Security Studies at AUC. Of course, Egypt plays a central role in this debate and we are very much looking forward to your remarks.

Sameh Aboul-Enein

Thank you so much. I am delighted to be here in the capital of the EU among so many close friends. My special thanks go first to Mark Fitzpatrick for his invitation to me to speak today on non-proliferation and security in the Middle East. I think this topic is of utmost importance, given the transformational changes underway in the political landscape in the Middle East. The Arab Spring will, without doubt, change existing fundamental dynamics and will have significant implications on the political and security setting of the region. In particular, we need to closely follow the unfolding of political developments that we all see and which are changing almost on a daily basis, and discern their impact on non-proliferation and security in the Middle East.

Let me add the word 'disarmament' to the title of this session, because security in the Middle East will not be achieved only through promoting non-proliferation, but more importantly through disarming those who possess weapons of mass destruction and play a central role in aggravating an arms race in the region.

Let me start by making a few remarks on the Arab Spring. I believe the Arab Spring will have a significant impact not only on domestic issues, but also on foreign policy and disarmament. Arab governments will become more accountable to their people, and especially the younger generation, in the streets, which will have an impact that will align these aspirations with foreign policy in the years to come. Public opinion will play a more significant and prominent role, as will parliaments, with their foreign affairs committees, Arab affairs committees and national security committees, in the formulation of foreign policy in several Arab countries that have undergone the Arab Spring.

Issues such as Israel's non-adherence to the NPT, the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, the unfolding of the Iran file and its complexities, and the encouragement of the peaceful use of nuclear energy are issues which are expected to be considered seriously during the years ahead. Although these issues were also at the forefront for previous decision-makers in several Arab countries, including Egypt, there is an expectation that they will adopt a more assertive voice on these issues. Even though a dramatic U-turn in policy is not foreseen, at least in the very imminent future, the Arab Spring will undoubtedly synchronise foreign-policy objectives with the aspirations of the people.

A nuclear-free zone in the Middle East is an issue that Egypt places great importance on during the upcoming review cycle of the NPT, which follows, of course, the adoption of the comprehensive final document and concrete action plans, including the action plan on the implementation of the Middle East 95 resolution at the successful NPT review conference of 2010.

The Middle East remains a highly volatile region troubled with protracted conflicts and the acquisition by states of such weapons can only contribute to greater instability, aggravate tensions, and lead to an accelerated arms race in the region. It is imperative, therefore, to complete the implementation of existing regional nuclear-weapon-free zones and work actively to establish zones free of WMD, particularly and most urgently in the Middle East. I want to stress that this issue must not be treated as 'business as usual'; simply, because business is no longer as usual.

Since the NPT review and extension conference in 1995 and the adoption of the resolution on the Middle East, this year, for the first time, we will have a significant opportunity to embark on a process that would lead to the establishment of such a zone. This is an opportunity which we must capitalise on. The 2012 Middle East conference to be held in Finland, as called for by the 2010 document, will be a milestone in that respect. This conference should not be viewed as a one-time event, but rather the beginning of a process that should culminate in the adoption of a legally binding treaty text with concrete measures as efficient verification modes, an accounting regime and institutions regionally under international auspices, with the involvement of the IAEA in Vienna.

I will point out a few provisions that I think should be included in that respect:

- Dismantling and destroying existing or remaining nuclear-weapon capabilities, facilities, and devices under international verification mechanisms.
- Renouncing nuclear weapons through refraining from conducting any indigenous development and activities related to nuclear weapons.
- Prohibiting stationing of any nuclear explosive device within the zone.
- Prohibiting nuclear explosive testing in the zone.
- Using nuclear materials and facilities only for peaceful purposes.
- Placing all nuclear facilities in the region under comprehensive IAEA safeguards.
- Establishing the necessary relevant institutions and mechanisms to uphold such a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMD, and addressing the role of the agency and other relevant organisations such as the OPCW and others.

Participation in the Middle East conference should be inclusive. The conference should include Israel, Iran and members of the League of Arab States, as well as the nuclear-weapon states and other relevant international organisations. There is a need to determine the criteria that will be applied to allow observers to participate. In this respect, the UN Secretary General and the three states depositories of the treaty have been entrusted with the responsibility of convening the conference in consultation with all the states in the region. The role of the facilitator, Ambassador Laajava from Finland, is one that is very much appreciated in this process.

In the build-up to that process, there needs to be a lot of benefit and guidance taken from other regional nuclear-free zones, such as Rarotonga, Tlatelolco, Pelindaba and Bangkok, as well as relevant institutions like the ABACC and EURATOM.

These are preliminary ideas for the zone but, in addition to that, there are other topics which have a direct bearing on the security of the region too. I will point to three of them:

The right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy is one. We need to reaffirm the inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and oppose additional restrictions on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We need to respect each other's choices and decisions in that field and undertake to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and for a peaceful nuclear upsurge in the Middle East. Countries should work to facilitate transfers of nuclear technology and international cooperation within NPT Articles I, II, III, and IV.

The second point is the fundamental role of the NPT, which must be reinforced in order to achieve nuclear disarmament in the Middle East. Nuclear-weapon states cannot expect non-nuclear-weapon states to indefinitely tolerate a situation where they are threatened with nuclear weapons, either by NPT states or by those outside the treaty. This is why the issue of NPT universality is also central in the build-up of a secure, stable Middle East. Nuclear disarmament in the Middle East should also

take place within the international efforts made, either within the 2010 NPT documents or within the Global Zero campaign that we have witnessed. The Middle East is no exception to that. The whole issue of double standards should end at this point.

The third point is around issues related to compliance. It is essential to support calls to ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the NPT. Compliance with the NPT is critical to strengthening the treaty. However, compliance with the treaty's provisions should not focus solely on non-proliferation issues, which tends to be the inclination of several states, but rather compliance with all provisions of the treaty, which include nuclear disarmament (Article VI) as well as those pertaining to Article IV. Finally, before concluding, I want to emphasise the central role of NGOs and civil society in the future of security in the Middle East. In the upcoming NPT review cycle, we need to encourage the participation of NGOs. They provide opportunities to present constructive ideas and initiatives which could help in achieving global disarmament but also regional disarmament. There is a necessity to encourage and recognise the important role they play, and that has been incorporated into the final document of the NPT review conference.

I believe that the 2012 Middle East conference and the process that follows should be inclusive to allow a more genuine, candid and necessary interaction about nuclear disarmament, dismantlement, nuclear roll-back, transparency – or openness, as His Royal Highness indicated – accountability, and verification. All these ingredients must be included. There has not been such an interaction for many years, and all the opportunities, in my view, at this stage. We should also welcome the EU Consortium in this respect and try to engage it with more with their counterparts in the Arab World and the Middle East.

In conclusion, it is worth recalling key successes in nuclear disarmament, which included South Africa's historic decision to dismantle its nuclear weapons, the decision by Argentina and Brazil to roll back their nuclear programmes and create a bilateral verification agency, and the decisions by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine to transfer nuclear weapons back to Russia. The actions by these states to give up nuclear programmes and weapons deserve greater recognition and acknowledgment, for they set an excellent example for other states, including those in the Middle East, to move away and to follow that course.

I believe it is imperative for countries to realise at this stage how dramatically the region is changing. This, in turn, requires modifications in the behaviour and approach of many. What was possible and acceptable before may not necessarily be plausible or tolerable today. All of us need to adapt to the changing realities on the ground and realise that our approach to security needs to be reviewed. The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMD can safeguard regional and international peace and security at this critical moment. We have an opportunity ahead of us. Let us not miss it. Thank you.

Camille Grand

Sameh, thank you so much for providing us with this comprehensive look at the issue of the zone and the path towards progress on it. Let me now turn to Ariel Levite, non-resident scholar and senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, one of the best minds on the topic and a great friend.