



*Working Paper*

**The Mutual-Reinforcement and Interdependence between Global Nuclear Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, and Regional Security Initiatives**

Working paper submitted by the Middle East Treaty Organization to the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, held in Geneva from 22 July to 2 August 2024, and to the Fourth Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, from 18 to 22 November 2024 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

**Executive Summary**

With the rise of geopolitical tensions, commitments and previous obligations tend to be overshadowed by events, and effective progress tends to be minimised or overlooked. In those situations, it is imperative not to lose track of long-term goals and objectives, aiming at establishing a peaceful and stable international environment that does not depend on the inherently unstable balance of fear. This working paper contributes to the negotiation efforts towards a more peaceful and stable international environment by highlighting the mutual enforcement and interdependence of Article VII (regional treaties), Articles I and II (Non-Proliferation), and Article VI (Disarmament) of the NPT, as well considering the decisions of the 1995 NPT Review Conference, which adopted a resolution calling for “the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems.”

**Mutual-Reinforcement and Interdependence of Non-Proliferation, Disarmament, and Regional Initiatives**

The NPT is grounded on three pillars, namely non-proliferation (Articles I and II), Disarmament (Article VI) and peaceful uses and cooperation (IV), under international verification (Article III). Those principles were already recognised, among others, by the final documents of the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences as interdependent and inseparable. They were also re-affirmed in the context of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which issued a 64-point Action Plan, addressing specific actions that should be pursued to ensure the accomplishment of the three pillars of the NPT. Among those actions, Action 9 of this Plan calls

for the establishment of NWFZs “where appropriate” and urges all states to ratify existing treaties, including nuclear-weapon states, which must ratify their negative security assurance protocols. Action 9 also aligns with Article VII of the NPT (regional treaties) and points out the interdependence between efforts at global and regional levels. Peace and security are built at the global and regional levels. Recognising this interdependence is crucial to pursuing the objectives of the NPT.

*Global and Regional Efforts in Ensuring Non-Proliferation.* Under Article 1 of the NPT, nuclear weapon states are obliged not to “assist, encourage, or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.” This is a subtle obligation that also implies an obligation to pursue in good faith the conditions that allow for stability and security *without* nuclear weapons. Those conditions include regional systemic measures in complementarity with those at the global level. Therefore, by not recognising the status of NWFZs and by not fully supporting existing negotiations, for instance, in the Middle East, under the mandate of a resolution issued by the 1995 NPT Review Conference, nuclear weapon states fail to fulfil their non-proliferation obligations under the NPT, particularly under Article I. In that regard, an immediate signature and ratification of protocols providing negative security assurances to existing NWFZs and support to the negotiations of new NWFZs is a vital step to ensuring effective non-proliferation. In association with those steps, State Parties of the NPT should proceed with broad and inclusive negotiations for a general treaty or general commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against *any* non-nuclear-weapon state.

*Global and Regional Disarmament Efforts.* Disarmament obligations in good faith are a second and crucial pillar of the NPT, under Article VI. Effective non-proliferation depends on progress on disarmament, as a means to provide stability both at global and regional levels. By failing to fulfil Article VI of the NPT, nuclear-weapon states are signalling to non-nuclear-weapon states and to states outside the NPT framework a lack of goodwill to achieve non-proliferation and disarmament. This lack of progress also affects the aims of the universalisation of the treaty and undermines its continued role as the cornerstone of the global nuclear order, and it impacts disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives at the regional level. Immediate already agreed-upon actions in that regard include advancing with the steps defined under Actions 1-22, particularly Action 5 of the 2010 Plan of Action, including addressing “the question of all nuclear weapons regardless of their type or their location as an integral part of the general nuclear disarmament process” and diminishing the “role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies”. Advancing the disarmament conditions at the global level also impacts positively the creation of the necessary conditions to advance regional negotiations.

**Advancements and Progress in the Middle East: The United Nations Regional Security Initiatives and the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction**

The obligation to negotiate a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction – also known as a weapons-of-mass-destruction free zone (MEWMDFZ) was given by the 1995 NPT Review Conference. Since then, negotiations have been held in this format to discuss how to establish the MEWMDFZ and how to implement effective and verifiable assurances. To strengthen this process, the UNGA adopted decision 73/546 of 22 December 2018, which convened a yearly conference to negotiate the terms of such a treaty until a treaty is achieved. This Conference has been held since 2019 and will host its fifth session in November 2024. All its decisions are taken by consensus by the States in the region, thereby providing an inclusive space for discussions, with a possibility of future inclusion of countries that are currently not parties to NPT. The Conference also “take as its terms of reference the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference” (Paragraph (a) (i)), thereby establishing its interdependence and mutually reinforcing developments achieved at NPT negotiations, while also contributing to the universalisation of the treaty.

The current format of dual-track negotiations holds three advantages: (1) It allows for focused negotiations, trust- and capacity-building among countries from the region; (2) it alleviates discussions at the NPT conference without alienating it from negotiation developments ; (3) it allows for inclusive dialogue and consensus building, including the possibility of integrating countries from the region that are not yet party to the NPT. In that light, we urge all State Parties of the NPT to acknowledge and support the negotiations being held by the MEWMDFZ Conference in light of mutually-enforcement and interdependence of non-proliferation, disarmament, and regional initiatives. Noting their efforts in good faith towards the objectives of the NPT, we also urge Middle Eastern state Parties to the NPT to call on nuclear weapon states to advance disarmament commitments and support regional initiatives worldwide, aiming at fulfilling non-proliferation (Articles I and II) and disarmament (Article VI) obligations with a view at global but also regional efforts (Article VII).

## **Recommendations**

As immediate recommendations, we call all state parties to the NPT to:

1. Recognise that Articles I and II, Article VI, and Article VII are *mutually reinforcing* and *interdependent* in the path to peace and to the goal of “general and complete disarmament”, as expressed in the preamble and in Article VI;
2. Recognise that Regional treaties and initiatives, as foresaw by Article VII, can provide means to reduce the risk of proliferation, use and misuse of nuclear weapons. Therefore, those initiatives should be stimulated, protected, and have their status recognised by all members of the NPT, including countries currently possessing nuclear weapons;
3. Urge all states currently possessing nuclear weapons to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith, particularly those that hold binding obligations under Article VI of the NPT and under previous decisions held by review conferences, particularly the 2010 Action Plan;

4. Urge all state parties to support and negotiate institutions and solutions that sustain a stable security environment without nuclear weapons, including, but not restricted to, (1) arms reduction and disarmament initiatives, (2) zones free of nuclear weapons, particularly those that would include countries that currently possess nuclear weapons, (3) negative security assurances;
5. Urge all nuclear-weapon-states to sign and ratify relevant documents that provide reliable negative security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon-states that they should not be targeted or threatened with the use of nuclear weapons, and that no nuclear weapon shall be used against them;
6. Call all NPT state Parties to support and recognise existing initiatives that complement and reinforce non-proliferation, risk-reduction, and disarmament objectives, particularly the “Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction”, held annually in the United Nations headquarters in New York, pursuant to General Assembly decision 73/546 of 22 December 2018

**The Middle East Treaty Organization (METO)** is a coalition of civil society activists and practitioners seeking to rid the Middle East from all Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as a gateway toward regional security and peace. We advance our goal through policy, advocacy and educational programs. Our vision is to have a peaceful, integrated and thriving Middle East built on human and environmental security. Our multidisciplinary team hail from the Middle East and beyond with an unquenchable drive to deliver innovative and strategic results that are achievable and inclusive.