

**IAEA Forum on  
Experience of Possible Relevance to the Creation of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone  
in the Middle East**

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**Statement by David Danieli**

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director General,

I wish to thank you, as well as to those who presented the experience of their regions. This Forum is convened by the Director General for the purpose of learning from the experience of other regions.

Mr. Chairman,

Each regional experience brings testimony to its unique geo-politics, culture, specific conditions and historical circumstances. Had it been one regional mold, applicable to all, we could possibly suffice ourselves with a single concise set of rules and procedures to attain a general outcome. Understandably, no one size fits all.

Experience of other regions makes it clear that establishing a NWFZ testifies to the collective political desire of the parties to reassure each other that peaceful means are resorted to in resolving their conflicts. Each regional state must be assured that any regional arrangement, let alone a NWFZ, improves rather than detracts from its national security. No general concern felt by the international community can substitute for what emanates collectively from within the region. Experience of other regions clearly points at a political reality that NWFZ's are not and cannot be imposed from outside.

It is certainly important to note that the creation of a NWFZ has not gained priority as a preferred mechanism in all regions. Europe, for example, that has gone an extensive process of confidence building and regional security has not found a NWFZ to be a desirable arrangement. In other regions, this tool was not perceived to be appropriate for a long period, until regional circumstances have ripen, and even then, it took decades to be negotiated and implemented. It is therefore obvious that a NWFZ is not a goal in itself, but rather one possible outcome of a gradual regional security process. The same holds for the issue of accession to any multilateral treaty, including the NPT, which is a sovereign decision of any state.

Experience shows that such a process can only be launched when normal, peaceful relations exist in the region, when the threat perception of all regional members is low, and only after basic confidence is established among states of the region.

A most profound attempt by the Secretary General of the UN to grapple with the notion of a NWFZ in the Middle East region is manifested in a thorough study dated October 1990, which is still valid today as it was then. The report states that creating a NWFZ in the Middle East is not simply a matter of some clever diplomatic formula, and that only a series of steps that reduce tensions drastically can bring the parties to a serious negotiation (para 91 of report A/45/435)

Mr. Chairman,

There is no agreed definition, regionally or internationally, of what constitutes the Middle East region. In Latin America and Africa, the definition of the region is based on geography. In all other regions, it is the outcome of a political agreement among the negotiating parties. A related political difficulty is demonstrated by the very fact that Israel is excluded from its natural regional group in the IAEA, namely the MESA group, where its membership is denied by those who put heavy demands on Israel in the regional context. It has been Israel's long standing position that one cannot contemplate a NWFZ in the ME without new commitments made by states which have direct involvement in nuclear proliferation to the ME. All such relevant states should be considered part of the region for that matter.

Regrettably, some speakers are confusing this learning session with the debate on the Middle East in the General Conference. Israel's position on the issue of regional arms control and security and the possible creation of a NWFZ in the ME has been reiterated in numerous occasions. Israel believes that the essential prerequisites for considering a NWFZ in the Middle East are still not present. First and foremost these include mutual recognition, normal relations and an atmosphere conducive to directly negotiating regional security regimes, let alone a NWFZ.

On the issue of verification, given the poor track record in our region concerning compliance with international obligations in the nuclear domain, our view is that only mutual verification arrangements can ensure that a free zone treaty is indeed implemented.

Mr. Chairman,

Iran's boycotting of this meeting is one example for the lack of basic regional conditions. Iran has been severely condemned and censored by the international community and the BOG of the IAEA for its pursuit of nuclear weapons in violation of its international obligations. The military dimensions of its nuclear program, detailed in the recent report of the Director General, are more relevant to the case and region of the Middle East than any other lesson gained somewhere else. I apologize for not mentioning in details Syria, which is another Middle East member state that is under the investigation of the IAEA.

Mr. Chairman,

This plenary session has been titled: "Discussions by the States of the Middle East region of the potential relevance of the experience of existing NWFZ's and regional verification arrangements to the case and region of the Middle East." Listening to the distinguished representatives presenting their respective regional experience, one cannot escape the conclusion that the Middle East region is lagging in terms of building trust and cooperation, regional stability and security. Political instability,

open hostilities, deep mistrust and non-compliance with international obligations are too common in many parts of the Middle East region. Thus, the vision of establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East will obviously take a long time to mature. Those in the region who wish to hasten the regional security process are aiming at specific demands addressed to Israel rather than genuine establishment of a NWFZ in the region. Israel remains hopeful that regional circumstances will evolve to allow regional peace and security, and is willing once again to actively contribute to a process leading to a desirable regional arrangement.

Thank you Mr. Chairman