



## *General Assembly First Committee*

### **Topic A: Nuclear Non-Proliferation in the Middle East**

*“Above all else, we need a reaffirmation of political commitment at the highest levels to reducing the dangers that arise both from existing nuclear weapons and from further proliferation.”<sup>1</sup>*

*—Kofi Annan, Former United Nations Secretary-General*

#### **Introduction**

The nuclear age of the 1940s led to significant advancements in energy and medical science while causing substantial change to the geopolitical landscape. Once the United States dropped two nuclear weapons on Japan in 1945, the destructive nature that nuclear weapons technology could pose became evident. In 1957, the US and several other Member States founded the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an international organization that is dedicated to promoting the use of nuclear technology for only peaceful purposes. After the IAEA was created, Member States adopted the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapon (NPT) in 1968, which was an agreement that aimed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Since then, much of the international community has attempted to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

Within the past few decades, the Middle East has become an area of concern regarding the potential proliferation of nuclear weapons and misuse of nuclear technology, as seen by the alleged attempts by Member States to circumvent IAEA safeguards to develop nuclear weapons programs secretly. The issue is further compounded by the rise of terrorism, militancy, and instability within the region, causing concern that malicious non-state actors may attempt to secure nuclear materials for violent purposes. The international community, particularly the General Assembly First Committee, has sought to address Nuclear Non-Proliferation in the Middle East by advancing a potential nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) and enforcing IAEA safeguards within the region.

#### **Background**

##### *International Non-proliferation Regime*

The NPT is the vital international agreement concerning nuclear weapons. It entered into force in 1970, and as of 2017, 189 UN Member States have signed the treaty. The treaty itself defines two sets of States Parties: Nuclear Weapons States and Non-Nuclear Weapons States. Nuclear Weapons States are defined “as those that had manufactured and detonated a nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967.” They are permitted to possess nuclear weapons, but commit to pursue their disarmament. All other states are Non-Nuclear Weapons States, which are not permitted to manufacture or possess nuclear weapons in any capacity. With the exception of Israel, each UN Member State in the Middle East has either ratified or acceded to the NPT, and has

---

<sup>1</sup> “Nuclear Disarmament Commentary,” Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, accessed on August 10, 2017, <http://lcnp.org/disarmament/Commentary/Commentary6.htm>.

entered into a safeguards agreement with the IAEA. Publically and diplomatically, Israel has never declared it has a nuclear weapons program. However, its non-ascension to the NPT, coupled with intelligence reports showing the State could possess up to 100 nuclear warheads, has been a point of strong tension with other states in the region.<sup>2</sup>

The IAEA serves as the international community's primary verification regime concerning nuclear weapons. Each Non-Nuclear Weapons State is bound by the NPT to enter into a "comprehensive safeguards agreement" with the IAEA. A safeguards agreement amounts to a series of monitoring and verification activities between the IAEA and the agreeing State to ensure a nuclear program is being used solely for peaceful purposes.

### *Regional Violation of IAEA Safeguards Agreements*

The issue of nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East dates back to the 1970s, shortly after the NPT entered into force.<sup>3</sup> A joint resolution, sponsored by Iran and Egypt, was adopted in 1974 by the General Assembly; it was the first time the international community formally recognized the importance of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, and as well as promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the resolution welcomed all countries within the region to place their nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards as a means to move forward towards a region free of nuclear weapons.<sup>5</sup> However, the IAEA has found several Member States in the Middle East to have allegedly violated their safeguards agreements to potentially develop nuclear weapons programs.<sup>6</sup>

Iraq was found in violation of IAEA safeguards, beginning in 1991 and continuing throughout the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> In 2003, the IAEA successfully reinstated inspections in cooperation with the Iraqi government and concluded on March 7, 2003 that there was no evidence of resumed nuclear activities.<sup>8</sup> Similar measures were established in the Syrian Arab Republic when, following an alleged nuclear site was attacked in 2007, the Board of Governors found the country to be violation of its safeguards agreement in 2011.<sup>9</sup> In 2014, Syria indicated its willingness to have the IAEA send inspectors to the country, but the United Nations Department of Safety and Security Systems

---

<sup>2</sup> "Israel," Nuclear Threat Initiative, accessed on August 2, 2017, <http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/israel/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran," Arms Control Association, accessed on August 2, 2017, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/Timeline-of-Nuclear-Diplomacy-With-Iran#2003>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Countries: Iran," Nuclear Threat Initiative, accessed on August 2, 2017, <http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/iran/nuclear/>.

<sup>6</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency Report by the Director General, "Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East," GOV/2012/38-GC(56)/17 (August 27, 2012), [https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gc56-17\\_en.pdf](https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gc56-17_en.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> "Iraq Nuclear Verification Office." International Atomic Energy Agency, accessed on August 2, 2017, <https://www.iaea.org/OurWork/SV/Invo/>.

<sup>8</sup> "IAEA, UN Inspections in Iraq Worked," International Atomic Energy Agency, News Center, February 2, 2004, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-un-inspections-iraq-worked>.

<sup>9</sup> "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic," International Atomic Energy Agency, Board of Governors, accessed on August 2, 2017, <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2014-44.pdf>.

assessment of the deteriorating security situation in Syria has deterred the agency from taking further action.<sup>10</sup>

In 2003, it came to the IAEA's attention that Iran was not properly reporting their quantities of fissile material.<sup>11</sup> This prompted an inquiry from the IAEA and the Board of Governors requesting Iran to allow access to and verify all of its nuclear activity.<sup>12</sup> In 2006, the Board of Governors was unable to conclude that all of the nuclear material in Iran was being used for peaceful purposes.<sup>13</sup> The UN Security Council also acted, passing Security Council Resolution 1737 against Iran, condemning it for its lack of cooperation with the IAEA.<sup>14</sup> This ignited strong tensions between Iran and the international community, up until 2013 when the Permanent Five Members of the Security Council, along with the European Union, began negotiations with Iran to halt its nuclear enrichment program and place it under intense international scrutiny.<sup>15</sup>

Lastly, it was disclosed to the IAEA in 2003 that Libya was seeking to develop highly enriched uranium that was capable of being used for a nuclear weapon. However, after this disclosure, Libya agreed in December of 2003 to halt its enrichment activities and bring all of its national nuclear programs under the oversight of its original IAEA safeguards agreement. In 2006, a new comprehensive safeguard was agreed to, giving the IAEA broader inspective rights to ensure transparency and accountability.

#### *Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East*

A Nuclear Weapons Free Zone is defined as a zone in which Member States agree to the complete absence of any nuclear weapons and their production, and subject it to international monitoring and verification mechanisms to ensure compliance. These zones ultimately served to prohibit the manufacturing, possession, testing and acquiring of nuclear weapons and exist within three different regions, specifically Africa, Southwest Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>16</sup>

In 1995, the States Parties to the NPT concluded in their Review Conference that the international community should take all necessary steps towards determining whether or not the creation of a NWFZ in the Middle East was feasible.<sup>17</sup> Notably, the States Parties to the NPT attempted to convene a conference specific to banning all Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in the Middle

---

<sup>10</sup> "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic."

<sup>11</sup> "Iran and the IAEA: verification and monitoring under the JCPOA," International Atomic Energy Agency, accessed on August 2, 2017, <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/5722627.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," European Union, accessed on August 2, 2017, [https://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/docs/iran\\_agreement/iran\\_joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/docs/iran_agreement/iran_joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action_en.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> D.A.V Fischer, "Safeguards and non-proliferation: geography, prospects, problems," accessed on July 20, 2017, <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/magazines/bulletin/bull23-4/23403480709.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies & Vienna Center for Disarmament and Nonproliferation, "Topic: Middle East Issues," (2014), [https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014\\_IAEA\\_GC\\_QA\\_Middle\\_East.pdf](https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014_IAEA_GC_QA_Middle_East.pdf).

East.<sup>18</sup> In the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the States Parties agreed to host such a conference in Finland. It was to be held in 2012, but it was cancelled when the convening States were unable to agree upon an agenda.<sup>19</sup>

Similar circumstances were seen in the 2015 NPT Review Conference where States Parties again tried to formulate a conference to address the question.<sup>20</sup> Specifically, many States Parties were in favor of having the Secretary-General convene a meeting before March 1, 2016 in order to establish more grounded framework.<sup>21</sup> The measure, however, became contested due to language surrounding the deadlines and agenda.<sup>22</sup> To this day, there is still no agreed upon agenda nor framework for a conference pertaining to the prohibition of nuclear weapons or other WMDs in the Middle East.<sup>23</sup>

## **Current Situation**

### *Iran and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*

In 2006, six countries, the United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom and Germany, also known as the P5+1, decided to engage Iran by proposing a series of negotiations to come a resolution on the question of Iran's nuclear program.<sup>24</sup> Iran initially rejected this proposal due to the requirement that Iran halt its enrichment activities indefinitely.<sup>25</sup> The United States also refused to participate until Iran met the demands of ceasing enrichment.<sup>26</sup> This elevated tensions between Iran and the international community until 2009, when the P5+1 regained the United States' support, and decided offer Iran incentives for negotiation.<sup>27</sup> Iran and the P5+1 met for the first time on October 1, 2009 to discuss the parameters of the talks.<sup>28</sup> In November of 2013, the P5+1 met to further discuss the implementation of a proposed action plan, known as the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*.<sup>29</sup>

After two full years of negotiations, the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* was agreed upon in the summer of 2015.<sup>30</sup> The plan detailed that sanctions and financial restrictions would be lifted from Iran while Iran agreed to halt the enrichment of uranium to certain levels.<sup>31</sup> The agreement came into force in the beginning of 2016, with the IAEA now monitoring 18 different facilities

---

<sup>18</sup> "Topic: Middle East Issues."

<sup>19</sup> "Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> "Countries: Iran."

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> "Topic: Middle East Issues."

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action."

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

and nine different locations throughout Iran.<sup>32</sup> In January of 2017, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano confirmed that Iran has met one of its first obligations in removing excess centrifuges and infrastructure from the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant.

### *Nuclear Security*

Given the expressed interest to develop peaceful nuclear programs in the region, the security of nuclear materials and technology remains a high concern. The Middle East region is still experiencing large-scale unrest, violence, and terrorism. Unless properly secured and handled, nuclear materials can be at risk of being stolen and smuggled for malicious purposes. Furthermore, nuclear installations are also at risk of becoming potential targets of terrorist attacks.

Member States are currently seeking to collaborate on this issue through Security Council Resolution 1540, which was adopted in 2004.<sup>33</sup> The resolution highlights obligations for Member States of the UN to prevent the illicit trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, their technologies and materials.<sup>34</sup> Ensuring that peaceful nuclear technology can be properly secured is critical in building confidence that such technology will not be misused.

### *Cooperation and Assistance*

The consortium of six member states, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, Qatar, and Oman, came together in 2006 and commissioned a study following IAEA guidelines on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In an effort to follow the global trend away from oil and natural gas and given the country's growth and prominence on the world stage, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) sought to build the region's first confirmed nuclear reactor. Over the past 10 years, the UAE and other Gulf States have gathered data, plans, and proposals to build the region's first nuclear power plant. Of the four proposed locations, one is set for completion in late 2017. With planning assistance from France and a final proposal chosen from a South Korean firm, this truly will be a global effort in the peaceful pursuit of nuclear energy.

### **Future Outlook**

Preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East has been a heavily deliberated and crucial issue for the international community.<sup>35</sup> The Middle East's volatile role in international politics has complicated the matter as nuclear proliferation can potentially manifest in many forms. To address this issue, UN Member States hope to establish a NWFZ in the area, in order to advance international peace and security.<sup>36</sup> However, much progress still needs to be made in how the international community wants to approach such an agreement.

---

<sup>32</sup> "Iran and the IAEA: verification and monitoring under the JCPOA."

<sup>33</sup> "About Security Council Resolution 1540," United Nations, accessed on August 2, 2017,

<http://www.un.org/en/sc/1540/index.shtml>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> "Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran."

<sup>36</sup> Fischer, "Safeguards and non-proliferation: geography, prospects, problems."

In addition to international agreements, implementing strong and effective safeguards will also help alleviate nuclear proliferation concerns and build regional stability.<sup>37</sup> Strong efforts will have to be made in order to ensure that safeguards are robust and verifiable.<sup>38</sup> Progress in the region has been made under the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*, but many short comings to proper implementation still remain.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, poor nuclear security may also adversely impact regional security, even if it involves peaceful nuclear programs. Properly securing all nuclear materials will be crucial for ensuring that the international community can have confidence for peaceful nuclear programs within the region.

---

<sup>37</sup> James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies & Vienna Center for Disarmament and Nonproliferation. “Topic: Middle East Issues.” (2014). [https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014\\_IAEA\\_GC\\_QA\\_Middle\\_East.pdf](https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014_IAEA_GC_QA_Middle_East.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. “IAEA Safeguards, Serving Nonproliferation.” (2016). [https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/5720407\\_0.pdf](https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/5720407_0.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies & Vienna Center for Disarmament and Nonproliferation. “Topic: Middle East Issues.” (2014). [https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014\\_IAEA\\_GC\\_QA\\_Middle\\_East.pdf](https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014_IAEA_GC_QA_Middle_East.pdf)

**Focus Questions:**

1. Does your Member State have a stance on key issues, such as the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* or a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East?
2. What are the potential ramifications of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and how might it affect your Member State?
3. What steps does your Member State take to ensure nuclear technologies are not diverted to terrorists and malicious non-state actors?
4. What steps has your Member State taken to partner with other Member States or non-governmental organizations to build peaceful nuclear solutions?
5. Does your Member State have a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA? What does it specify?

## Bibliography

- “About Security Council Resolution 1540.” United Nations. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <http://www.un.org/en/sc/1540/index.shtml>.
- “Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East, GC/59.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on August 2, 2017. [https://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC59/GC59Resolutions/English/gc59res-15\\_en.pdf](https://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC59/GC59Resolutions/English/gc59res-15_en.pdf).
- “Countries: Iran.” Nuclear Threat Initiative. Accessed on August 2, 2017, <http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/iran/nuclear/>.
- “Department of Safeguards.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <https://www.iaea.org/about/organizational-structure/department-of-safeguards>.
- Fischer, D.A.V. “Safeguards and non-proliferation: geography, prospects, problems.” Accessed on July 20, 2017. <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/magazines/bulletin/bull23-4/23403480709.pdf>.
- “IAEA Forum on Experience of Possible Relevance to the Creation of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on August 2, 2017. [https://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC54/GC54Documents/English/gc54-14\\_en.pdf](https://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC54/GC54Documents/English/gc54-14_en.pdf).
- “IAEA General Conference.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <https://www.iaea.org/about/policy/gc>.
- “IAEA Safeguards, Serving Nuclear Nonproliferation.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on August 2, 2017. [https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/5720407\\_0.pdf](https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/5720407_0.pdf).
- “IAEA, UN Inspections in Iraq Worked.” International Atomic Energy Agency, News Center. February 2, 2004. <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-un-inspections-iraq-worked>.
- “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic.” International Atomic Energy Agency, Board of Governors. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2014-44.pdf>.
- International Atomic Energy Agency Report by the Director General. “*Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East*.” GOV/2012/38-GC(56)/17 (August 27, 2012). [https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gc56-17\\_en.pdf](https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gc56-17_en.pdf).

- International Atomic Energy Agency. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. INFCIRC/140 (April 22, 1970).  
<https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/1970/infcirc140.pdf>
- “Iran and the IAEA: verification and monitoring under the JCPOA.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on August 2, 2017.  
<https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/5722627.pdf>
- “Iraq Nuclear Verification Office.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <https://www.iaea.org/OurWork/SV/Invo/>.
- “Israel.” Nuclear Threat Initiative. Accessed on August 2, 2017.  
<http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/israel/>.
- James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies & Vienna Center for Disarmament and Nonproliferation. “Topic: Middle East Issues.” (2014).  
[https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014\\_IAEA\\_GC\\_QA\\_Middle\\_East.pdf](https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014_IAEA_GC_QA_Middle_East.pdf)
- “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.” European Union. Accessed on August 2, 2017.  
[https://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/docs/iran\\_agreement/iran\\_joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/docs/iran_agreement/iran_joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action_en.pdf)
- “Nuclear Disarmament Commentary.” Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy. Accessed on August 10, 2017. <http://lcnp.org/disarmament/Commentary/Commentary6.htm>.
- “Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.” United Nations, Institute for Disarmament Research. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/nuclear-weapon-free-zones-en-314.pdf>.
- “Safeguards.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on July 20, 2017.  
<https://www.iaea.org/safeguards>.
- “Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran.” Arms Control Association. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/Timeline-of-Nuclear-Diplomacy-With-Iran#2003>.
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/24. *Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East*. A/RES/70/24 (December 7, 2015).  
<http://www.undocs.org/A/RES/70/24>.

- “Verification and Monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in light of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.” International Atomic Energy Agency. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/16/06/gov2016-23.pdf>.
- “WMD-Free Middle East Proposal at a Glance.” Arms Control Association. Accessed on August 2, 2017. <https://www.armscontrol.org/print/4705>.