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# Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference Background Guide 2026

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with support from Emma A. Bott



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (NPT). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Sebastian Hieke and Assistant Director Myrana Ruzigamanzi (Conference A), and Director Kaytlyn Marcotte and Assistant Director Hat Alzahrani (Conference B). Sebastian holds a master's degree in Near and Middle Eastern Studies from LMU Munich. He is currently working with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Defence based in Vienna. Myrana studies Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution at Salisbury University and has a background in International Studies with a concentration in Global and Comparative Perspectives. Kaytlyn holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Political Economy from the College of Idaho. She currently works as a Customer Success Manager for dairy proteins with Actus Nutrition in Minnesota. Hat studies Terrorism and Homeland Security at American University and has a background in Law and disaster relief. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Alexandra Bogdasarow (Conference A) and Aemin Becker (Conference B), as well as by Emma A. Bott, Director of Conference Management (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Establishment of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East
2. Safeguards and Verification Measures for Nuclear Disarmament

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 PM ET on 1 March 2026 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at [dsg.ny@nmun.org](mailto:dsg.ny@nmun.org).

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Sebastian Hieke, Director  
Myrana Ruzigamanzi, Assistant Director  
Conference A

Kaytlyn Marcotte, Director  
Hat Alzahrani, Assistant Director  
Conference B



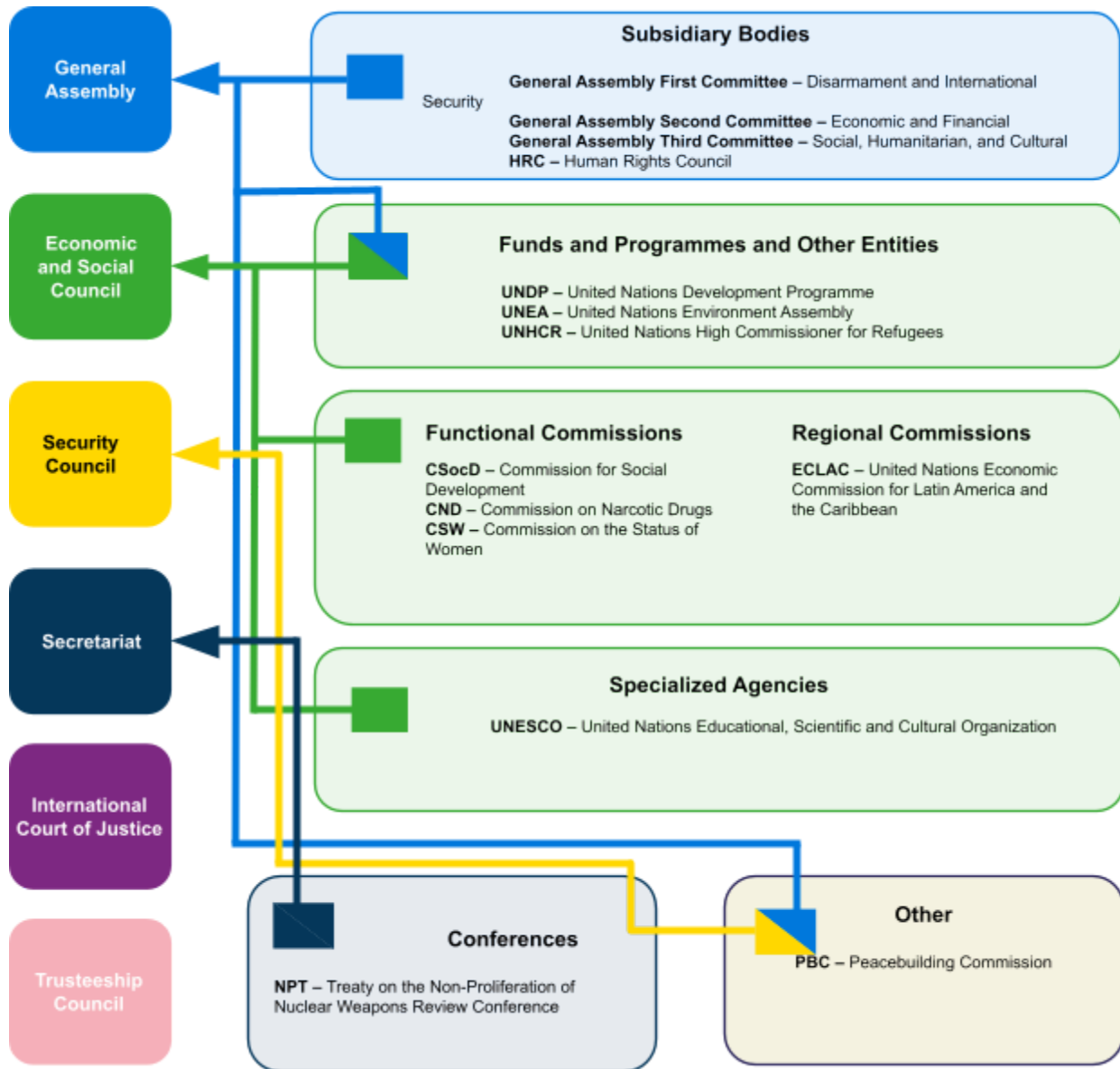
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## United Nations System at NMUN·NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN·NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





## Committee Overview

### Introduction

The *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT), which opened for signature in 1968 and entered into force in 1970, aims to achieve the complete disarmament of nuclear-weapon States, prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and promote peaceful uses of nuclear energy.<sup>1</sup> Originally, NPT was set to end in 1995 but was extended indefinitely during the *1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (1995 Review and Extension Conference).<sup>2</sup> NPT is an important part of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, influencing several regional nuclear weapons-free zones such as the *South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty* (1985), *Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone* (1995), *African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Treaty* (1996), and *Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zone in Central Asia* (2006).<sup>3</sup> NPT provides for Review Conferences to ensure that the objectives set forward in NPT are realized.<sup>4</sup>

### Mandate, Functions, and Powers

Article VIII of NPT and 1995 Review and Extension Conference formalized the review process and defined objectives and principles for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.<sup>5</sup> The Review Conferences are mandated to identify areas in which the implementation of NPT and its universal adherence can be strengthened.<sup>6</sup> They focus on recommendations and conclusions for nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and establishing a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.<sup>7</sup>

Review Conferences take place every five years.<sup>8</sup> Preparations for the *2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* are currently underway.<sup>9</sup> It should be

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid; 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Final Documents (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I))*. 1995.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty*. 1985; United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs. *African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba)*. 1995; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone*. 1995; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia*. 2006; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*. 2025.

<sup>4</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (INFCIRC/140)*. 1970. p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative. *1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference - Decisions and Resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference*. 2002. pp. 364-367.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 364-367.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - Preparatory Committee for the Eleventh Review Conference (2024)*. N.d.

<sup>8</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative. *1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference - Decisions and Resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference*. 2002. p. 364.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - Preparatory Committee for the Eleventh Review Conference (2023)*. N.d.



noted that the preceding Eleventh Review Conference, scheduled to occur in 2020, was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was instead held in 2022.<sup>10</sup> Since the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, all Review Conferences have had three sessions of the Preparatory Committee.<sup>11</sup> These sessions occur in the three years preceding the conference, and all State parties to NPT are invited to attend the sessions.<sup>12</sup> The purpose of the sessions is to address substantive and procedural issues related to NPT and the Review Conferences over the course of approximately 10 working days.<sup>13</sup> Since 2000, the First and Second Sessions have focused on identifying principles, objectives, and ways to promote NPT, while the Third Sessions has concentrated on producing a consensus report of recommendations to the Review Conference.<sup>14</sup>

While the following list is not exhaustive, NPT Review Conference's mandate can be summarized as follows:

- NPT Review Conference **will generally**: review the operation of NPT and implementation of past Review Conference commitments; produce conclusions and recommendations on nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the Middle East; create a program of action for continued operation of NPT; and establish subsidiary bodies to review issues requiring more focused consideration.<sup>15</sup>
- NPT Review Conference **will generally not**: prevent State parties from researching, producing, and using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; promote withdrawal from NPT; stop the development of nuclear weapons by non-signatories; and prevent the nuclear technology from being used for weapons.<sup>16</sup>

### **Governance, Funding, and Structure**

There are 191 States that have signed NPT, which includes five States with nuclear weapons, making NPT the most ratified arms limitation and disarmament agreement.<sup>17</sup> Decisions are typically adopted by

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<sup>10</sup> Arms Control Association. *NPT Review Delayed Again*. 2021.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *NPT Review Conferences and Preparatory Committees*. N.d.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - Preparatory Committee for the Eleventh Review Conference (2023)*. N.d.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Mukhatzhanova. Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. *NPT Review Process: An Explainer*. N.d.; Nuclear Threat Initiative. *1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference - Decisions and Resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference*. 2002. pp. 364-367; United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373 (XXII))*. 1968. p. 7; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - Preparatory Committee for the Eleventh Review Conference (2024)*. N.d.; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - Preparatory Committee for the Eleventh Review Conference (2025)*. N.d.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid; World Nuclear Association. *Safeguards to Prevent Nuclear Proliferation*. 2021.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.



consensus over the course of four weeks at Review Conferences.<sup>18</sup> However, there have been instances where a consensus could not be reached, as has been the case in 2005, 2015, and 2022.<sup>19</sup> The procedure of Review Conferences has been determined by the lead up to the *1975 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* and subsequent Review Conferences, particularly the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.<sup>20</sup> At the Review Conference, Main Committees focus on substantive issues.<sup>21</sup> For example, Main Committee I focuses on disarmament and security assurances, Main Committee II discusses non-proliferation and regional issues, and Main Committee III addresses peaceful uses and miscellaneous issues.<sup>22</sup>

The funding of Review Conferences is the responsibility of the State parties of NPT, thus, the regular budget of the United Nations is not financially impacted or implicated.<sup>23</sup> A majority of the State parties have met their financial obligations, although there are outstanding contributions dating back to 1995.<sup>24</sup> The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is empowered under Article III of NPT to perform significant verification responsibilities and oversee comprehensive safeguards agreements with State parties under NPT.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, IAEA oversees State parties' adherence to their obligations under NPT.<sup>26</sup> The General Assembly, NPT, and its Review Conferences all promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - Preparatory Committee for the Eleventh Review Conference (2024)*. N.d.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid; United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.

<sup>20</sup> Mukhatzhanova. Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. *NPT Review Process: An Explainer*. N.d.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Financial Report (NPT/CONF.2026/PC.III/7)*. 2025. p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA and the Non-Proliferation Treaty*. 2025.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.



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## 1. Establishment of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East

### Introduction

Nuclear weapons are considered to be one of the most dangerous categories of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).<sup>28</sup> WMDs include chemical, biological, nuclear, and missile weapon devices and systems.<sup>29</sup> These weaponry systems are classified as such based on their capability to cause mass destruction to human and natural life.<sup>30</sup> Since 1993, only one Member State has still considered the future possession of nuclear weapons.<sup>31</sup> By the 2010s, Member States drastically reduced the global number of nuclear weapons to the 20,000 range.<sup>32</sup>

General Assembly resolution 3472 (1975) on “Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in all its Aspects” defines Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) as a region of states recognized by the General Assembly that have agreed by treaty or convention to have the complete absence of nuclear weapons and conform to a strict set of international compliance measures.<sup>33</sup> These compliance measures are agreed upon by Member States of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>34</sup> Measures are annually evaluated by the IAEA Board of Governors and during annual IAEA meetings.<sup>35</sup> After growing concerns of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East during the 1960s, regional Member States proposed and adopted General Assembly resolution 3263 on “Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in the Region of the Middle East.”<sup>36</sup> Member States have called for the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East since 1974.<sup>37</sup>

Adopted in 1968, the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) defines what makes a state a nuclear-weapon state or a non-nuclear-weapon state and outlines verification measures for those considered to be nuclear-weapon-capable.<sup>38</sup> A nuclear-weapon state is a Member State that manufactured and detonated a nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967.<sup>39</sup> Non-nuclear weapon states are Member States that signed the NPT and committed to not manufacture or acquire nuclear explosives.<sup>40</sup> Both categories of Member States agree to various compliance measures to ensure that the NPT is upheld.<sup>41</sup> IAEA safeguards, which focus on the inclusion of inspection and monitoring of nuclear operations through established protocols, serve as the main foundation for verification systems in the

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Weapons of mass destruction*. N.d.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. *Weapons of Mass Destruction*. 2025.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Our World in Data. *Nuclear Weapons*. 2025.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in all its Aspects (A/RES/3472 (XXX))*. 1975.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *The Statute of the IAEA*. 1989.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in the Region of the Middle East (A/RES/3263(XXIX))*. 1974.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373 (XXII))*. 1968.

<sup>39</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *The IAEA and the Non-Proliferation Treaty*. 2025.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



Middle East.<sup>42</sup> IAEA verification measures include various inspections (ad hoc, routine, and special) and safeguard visits, which are carried out in line with agreements signed with each Member State.<sup>43</sup> On-site inspections allow for data collection on nuclear facilities and encourage transparency amongst participating NPT States parties that participate in the verification agreements.<sup>44</sup>

### **International and Regional Framework**

With 191 States parties, the NPT is one of the most generally adhered-to arms control agreements regarding the use of nuclear weapons, technologies, and energy.<sup>45</sup> The three core pillars of the NPT are disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.<sup>46</sup> The NPT is made up of many tasks that include preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and pursuing nuclear disarmament.<sup>47</sup> The NPT has nearly universal membership with 191 States parties, thus making it the most generally adhered-to arms control agreement according to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), a United Nations office that supports multilateral disarmament efforts.<sup>48</sup> Article VII of the NPT promotes NWFZs to advance global disarmament and prevent nuclear weapons within designated regions.<sup>49</sup> By using NWFZs, the United Nations aims for disarmament efforts to be more viable and locally supported.<sup>50</sup> NWFZs are tailored to the distinct political and security situations of each region and freely agreed to by the applicable Member States within that region.<sup>51</sup> Since 1975, an NPT Review Conference has been held every five years to evaluate the NPT's implementation, advancements, and difficulties.<sup>52</sup>

NWFZs are recognised under international law for their legally binding commitment, which prohibits the development, acquisition, and detonation/testing of nuclear weapons within the defined boundary.<sup>53</sup> Presently, there are five existing NWFZs.<sup>54</sup> The first NWFZ was established in 1967 under the *Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Tlatelolco)*, which defined an area of approximately 20 million square kilometers and was signed by 33 Member States.<sup>55</sup> The 1985 *Treaty of Rarotonga* established an NWFZ in the South Pacific, the 1995 *Treaty of Bangkok* established

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<sup>42</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Bulletin: Strengthening Safeguards and Verification*. 2021.

<sup>43</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Supporting Member States: IAEA Peer Reviews and Advisory Services*. N.d.

<sup>44</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Bulletin: Strengthening Safeguards and Verification*. 2021.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373 (XXII))*. 1968.

<sup>46</sup> Eklund. International Atomic Energy Agency. *How to Strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*. N.d.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373 (XXII))*. 1968.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid; United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Disarmament Commission (A/54/42)*. 1999.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid; United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Disarmament Commission (A/54/42)*. 1999.

<sup>52</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons --Tenth Review Conference*. 2022.

<sup>53</sup> United Nations Platform for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. *Overview of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones*. N.d.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Treaties. *Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Tlatelolco)*. 1967.



an NWFZ in Southeast Asia, and the 1996 *Treaty of Pelindaba* established an NWFZ in Africa.<sup>56</sup> These NWFZs were created in response to regional security dynamics and proliferation concerns.<sup>57</sup> The most recent NWFZ was established in 2006 with the signing of the *Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia*.<sup>58</sup>

Efforts to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East have been shaped by decades of regional conflict, diplomatic challenges, and a series of key United Nations resolutions and review conferences aimed at advancing disarmament and non-proliferation.<sup>59</sup> In 1988, General Assembly resolution 43/65 on “Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East” outlined initial conditions for establishing the region as nuclear-weapon-free.<sup>60</sup> The conditions included encouraging regional Member States to strongly consider implementing the NWFZ, continuing to advance the uses of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and requesting that Member States remain transparent in their nuclear efforts.<sup>61</sup> In the years that followed, the General Assembly issued several resolutions on related topics, including General Assembly resolutions 44/108 on “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East,” 45/63 on “Israeli nuclear armament,” and 47/49 on “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia,” which collectively attempted to address the nuclear issue in the Middle East.<sup>62</sup> Following the 1995 NPT Review Conference, the *Resolution on the Middle East* (NPT/CONF/1995/32) reached consensus on critical steps toward establishing a Middle East NWFZ, including universal NPT accession and IAEA safeguards.<sup>63</sup>

The 1995 *Resolution on the Middle East* remains a landmark commitment by NPT States parties to regional disarmament and non-proliferation.<sup>64</sup> Decades of violence, such as the Arab-Israeli wars, the lack of a complete peace, and worries about the presence of unsafeguarded nuclear plants in the area, influenced the resolution's emergence.<sup>65</sup> The resolution emphasizes the need for a concrete measure to guarantee non-members' involvement in the NPT framework, which is a recurring issue of regional contention.<sup>66</sup> It also calls for all Middle Eastern Member States to accede to the NPT and place their nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards to eliminate potential weapons development.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> United Nations Platform for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. *Overview of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones*. N.d..

<sup>57</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia*. 2006.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Bino et al. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Middle East WMD-Free Zone Project Final Report*. 2023.

<sup>60</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Region of the Middle East (A/RES/43/65)*. 1988.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Israeli nuclear armament (A/RES/45/63)*. 1990; United Nations, General Assembly. *Strengthening of the United Nations (A/RES/49/47)*. 1992; United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East (A/45/435, annex)*. 1990.

<sup>63</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Resolution on the Middle East (NPT/CONF/1995/32)*. 1995.

<sup>64</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons -- Tenth Review Conference*. 2022.

<sup>65</sup> Raja. NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability. *The Age of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times by EIBaradei, Mohamed*. 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons -- Tenth Review Conference*. 2022.



## Role of the International System

The NPT has played a vital role in the attempted establishment of a Middle East NWFZ by facilitating dialogue, hosting conferences, and providing an indefinite extension of the NPT.<sup>68</sup> Resulting from the NPT review process, the NPT Review Conference has attempted to hold numerous conferences focused on establishing the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFZ), including a significant meeting in 2012, though efforts have been stalled due to political disagreements.<sup>69</sup> IAEA contributes to regional cooperation and communication through the NPT framework by assisting in the signing of safeguards agreements for peaceful nuclear operations and providing regional educational networks and training courses.<sup>70</sup>

International and regional actors play a central role in advancing efforts to establish a Middle East NWFZ by providing neutral forums for dialogue and sustaining diplomatic engagement.<sup>71</sup> UNODA annually convenes the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other WMDs.<sup>72</sup> The conference aims to promote regional disarmament, peace, and security by offering a platform for discussing the adoption of a legally binding agreement to create a Middle East WMDFZ.<sup>73</sup> Intergovernmental organizations such as the IAEA help these efforts by tracking material accountancy and containment protocols to guarantee that nuclear materials are not tampered with and are audited.<sup>74</sup> To build regional trust and non-proliferation compliance, IAEA encourages transparency through independent verification and treaty compliance.<sup>75</sup> The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), an autonomous United Nations research institute, contributes to these efforts by publishing region-specific studies and policy toolkits aimed at facilitating multilateral negotiations and technical harmonization among Member States.<sup>76</sup> UNIDIR's studies emphasize that in order to successfully establish a realistic and equitable disarmament arrangement, such as a NWFZ, Member States must consider existing security concerns, historical grievances, and the broader strategic environment.<sup>77</sup> In 1999, the United Nations Disarmament Commission Report outlined and recommended a set of guidelines and principles for establishing a NWFZ.<sup>78</sup> These principles include ensuring that Member States from the region freely agree on the arrangements of the agreement, consulting nuclear-weapon states during negotiations, and establishing that the NWFZ must not prevent the use and advancement of nuclear science and technology for peaceful means.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Eklund. International Atomic Energy Agency. *How to Strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*. N.d.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Secretary-General on the Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East (A/77/153 (Part I))*. 2022.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction*. 2019.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Suseanu. International Atomic Energy Agency Bulletin. *IAEA Safeguards under Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaties*. 2021.

<sup>75</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Supporting Member States: IAEA Peer Reviews and Advisory Services*. N.d.

<sup>76</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Harmonizing the Minimum Nuclear Non-Proliferation Commitments of States in the Middle East*. 2025.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Disarmament Commission (A/54/42)*. 1999.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.



Through capacity-building programs and inclusive dialogue, international institutions like UNODA and IAEA play a crucial role in furthering disarmament in the Middle East by encouraging multilateral participation, technical cooperation, and transparency.<sup>80</sup> The Secretary-General's 2022 *Report on the Third Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other WMD (A/77/153 (Part I))* reaffirmed the significance of these initiatives, highlighting that multilateral engagement and technical assistance are essential for facilitating equal participation and confidence among regional parties.<sup>81</sup> UNODA and IAEA continue to collaborate with regional experts through capacity-building measures, including verification support and legislative assistance, and various diplomatic missions to ensure that discussions on disarmament are grounded in both political will and technical feasibility.<sup>82</sup> To increase stakeholder participation and exchange best practices on treaty negotiation, verification, and compliance, UNODA organizes collaborative panel sessions with regional organizations and civil society, such as the Expert Panel on Nuclear War Impacts and the Vienna Conversation Series.<sup>83</sup> IAEA encourages Middle Eastern Member States to voluntarily publish safeguards implementation reports, participate in bilateral data exchange, and attend international forums like the Nuclear Security Summit and the Global Dialogue on Nuclear Security to increase transparency and build trust between Member States.<sup>84</sup>

Regional blocs and civil society organizations release joint proposals and working papers to encourage inclusive negotiations and create an institutional and legal framework for the Middle Eastern NWFZ.<sup>85</sup> The Gulf Cooperation Council, the League of Arab States, and the Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) have made several statements in favor of a Middle East devoid of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, which is consistent with previously expressed viewpoints by Middle Eastern Member States that want regional stability through multilateral frameworks.<sup>86</sup> Several documents published by the League of Arab States, the 2024 IAEA statement, and the 2023 Statement at the United Nations, emphasize the importance of trust-building measures and transparency mechanisms among states as a prerequisite for future disarmament commitments.<sup>87</sup> METO has also played an active role in United Nations WMD/FZ Conferences since 2019.<sup>88</sup> Since 2017, METO has facilitated the creation of draft treaty texts for a Middle Eastern NWFZ and convenes side events with diplomats and academics to promote civil society participation in treaty-making processes.<sup>89</sup> Through its yearly disarmament and non-proliferation-focused activities and publications, UNODA facilitates communication amongst regional stakeholders and offers technical assistance in support of these initiatives.<sup>90</sup> Civil society initiatives such as METO's youth

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<sup>80</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Secretary-General on the Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East (A/77/153 (Part I))*. 2022.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction*. 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Supporting Member States: IAEA Peer Reviews and Advisory Services*. N.d.

<sup>85</sup> Middle East Treaty Organization. *Working Papers and Statements to the UN Conference on the Middle East WMD-Free Zone*. N.d.

<sup>86</sup> Gulf Cooperation Council. *Ministerial Statements on Regional Security and Non-Proliferation*. 2024.

<sup>87</sup> League of Arab States. *Resolution Issued by the Extraordinary Arab and Islamic Summit*. 2024.

<sup>88</sup> Middle East Treaty Organization. *Working Papers and Statements to the UN Conference on the Middle East WMD-Free Zone*. N.d.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction*. 2019.



engagement programs and simulation exercises help raise awareness about disarmament issues among young professionals and future policymakers from the region.<sup>91</sup>

### **Verification and Compliance Efforts for a NWFZ in the Middle East**

Research states that achieving broad agreement on verification and compliance efforts significantly stalls progress towards an NWFZ in the Middle East.<sup>92</sup> Due to existing conflict within the region, Member States disagree on verification and compliance standards due to the intersection between the acquisition and dismantlement of nuclear weapons.<sup>93</sup> Often, regional Member States acquired nuclear weapons for protection.<sup>94</sup> Acceptance of a verification treaty would require a baseline declaration of existing weapons inventory; however, Member States may risk revealing sensitive information that could evidence a violation of their existing non-proliferation commitments.<sup>95</sup> Some nuclear programs may also have poor accounting protocols to track the amount of weapons developed.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, Member States may confidently attest to having no nuclear weapons while in possession of a stockpile unbeknownst to their government.<sup>97</sup> For example, when Albania signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, its ministry was unaware of 600 bulk containers of chemicals hidden in an abandoned bunker.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to its core verification mandate, IAEA plays a significant educational role by providing training and guidance to Member States and civil society on nuclear safeguards and compliance.<sup>99</sup> Held in November 2024, the fifth session of the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East NWFZ included thematic discussions on nuclear verification and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.<sup>100</sup> Ongoing discussions focus on the establishment of IAEA safeguards and the significance of public education on non-proliferation practices.<sup>101</sup> To support public education on non-proliferation practices, IAEA provides online and in-person training courses on topics such as nuclear safety, radiation protection, and technical cooperation.<sup>102</sup> These courses were launched via the IAEA Learning and Training website and IAEA's Global Nuclear Safety and Security Network, providing a suite of courses led by experts in nuclear technology.<sup>103</sup> Despite continued global discussions towards establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East, continued disagreements in the region regarding terms of the agreement, safeguards, verification oversight, and responsibilities of Member States have limited progress.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Youth for Disarmament. *About Us*. N.d.

<sup>92</sup> Middlebury Institute for International Studies at Monterey. James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. *Planning Ahead: A Blueprint to a Middle East WMD-Free Zone*. 2015. pp. 35-46.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Arms Control Association. *Addressing Verification in the Nuclear Ban Treaty*. 2017.

<sup>96</sup> Middlebury Institute for International Studies at Monterey. James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. *Planning Ahead: A Blueprint to a Middle East WMD-Free Zone*. 2015. pp. 35-46.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Voice of America. *US Funds Destruction of Albanian Chemical Weapons Stockpile*. 2009.

<sup>99</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Nuclear Disarmament Verification: Survey of Verification Mechanisms*. 2016.

<sup>100</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Harmonizing the Minimum Nuclear Non-Proliferation Commitments of States in the Middle East*. 2025.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Training Courses*. 2025.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Harmonizing the Minimum Nuclear Non-Proliferation Commitments of States in the Middle East*. 2025.



UNIDIR states that the establishment of a Middle East NWFZ requires a verification system designed to detect violations and ensure compliance with disarmament obligations.<sup>105</sup> UNIDIR details that these verification procedures use technological advances such as satellite imaging and Artificial Intelligence-supported monitoring tools to facilitate data gathering and analysis.<sup>106</sup> Through several international technical studies, the IAEA identified that dual-tracking verification models are an organized method used in many regional disarmament contexts.<sup>107</sup> Dual-tracking verification models integrate international inspections with regional peer review processes.<sup>108</sup> According to UNIDIR, these coordinated verification systems should function within an established protocol to monitor compliance with nuclear non-proliferation obligations.<sup>109</sup>

According to UNIDIR, regional arrangements for safeguards and related verification could significantly benefit NWFZ parties by ensuring compliance, preventing the manufacturing of nuclear weapons, and enhancing confidence-building.<sup>110</sup> If regional states attempt to implement a regional verification system, current regional safeguards systems such as Euratom and the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) can be used.<sup>111</sup> Euratom and ABACC include characteristics such as having mutual inspections for negotiators, among other features, that are appropriate for usage in the Middle East.<sup>112</sup> However, UNIDIR states that a stronger commitment to regional integration is required in the Middle East.<sup>113</sup> UNIDIR suggests that building knowledge and fostering a safeguards culture at the Member State-level would be facilitated by encouraging the use of traditional national safeguards bodies.<sup>114</sup>

Small Quantities Protocol (SQP) modifications can help enforce compliance and reduce loopholes in line with the NPT and international norms.<sup>115</sup> The SQP is a protocol from a comprehensive safeguards agreement reached between IAEA and a Member State based on their possession of no nuclear material in a facility and small amounts of nuclear material below specified minimum quantities.<sup>116</sup> The SQP is monitored through ad hoc inspections by IAEA and requires Member States to maintain a national legislative framework for nuclear material accounting and control.<sup>117</sup> SQPs are part of IAEA's safeguards system for non-nuclear-weapon states under the NPT and permit fewer and less detailed reporting in cases when nuclear material use is below a minimal threshold or nonexistent; however, IAEA made

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<sup>105</sup> Carlson. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Nuclear Verification in a Middle East WMD Free Zone*. 2021.

<sup>106</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and Their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts (A/79/224)*. 2024.

<sup>107</sup> Carlson. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Nuclear Verification in a Middle East WMD Free Zone*. 2021.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Nuclear Disarmament Verification: Survey of Verification Mechanisms*. 2016.

<sup>110</sup> Carlson. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Nuclear Verification in a Middle East WMD Free Zone*. 2021.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *More on Safeguards Agreements*. 2025.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.



significant changes to SQP in 2005 to close loopholes and increase oversight.<sup>118</sup> One of the changes to the SQP that improves nuclear security for IAEA Member States is the Modified SQP.<sup>119</sup> In contrast to the original SQP, the Modified SQP lessens the burden of safeguards actions for Member States while maintaining the requirement to submit first reports on nuclear material and permit IAEA inspections.<sup>120</sup> However, the implementation of modified SQPs by several Middle Eastern Member States has limited the scope and frequency of reporting and inspections, raising concerns about transparency and material accounting.<sup>121</sup> These modifications, coupled with limited data on the actual quantities of nuclear material possessed by Member States that signed on to the SQP, present challenges for verifying compliance and enforcing safeguards in line with international norms.<sup>122</sup>

### **Socio-Political Obstacles to Regional Disarmament Initiatives**

Enduring conflicts, the absence of diplomatic relations, and significant security asymmetries continue to impede cooperation on disarmament among Member States in the Middle East.<sup>123</sup> The United Nations has facilitated communication, encouraged steps that promote confidence-building measures, and sought to broaden the scope to include a wider definition of the WMD-FZ to overcome sociopolitical challenges in the region.<sup>124</sup> During the fifth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East, the United Nations hosted a discussion involving 22 Member States that included observer states and international organizations to gain a wide array of opinions and expertise.<sup>125</sup> However, research states that sociopolitical obstacles such as outside military alliances, ideological disputes, and regime instability hamper the region's ability to pursue collective disarmament attempts.<sup>126</sup> Further, historical grievances between regional Member States, including territorial disputes and differing threat perceptions, have contributed to a deep-rooted lack of trust between Member States that complicate efforts to establish a regional framework for non-proliferation, as stated by UNIDIR's research.<sup>127</sup> Through resolutions such as the NPT, diplomatic initiatives like the 2004 Gulf Research Center proposal for a subregional zone, and expert studies published by UNIDIR, the United Nations has consistently worked to create a Middle East NWFZ.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *INFCIRC/153 (Corrected): The Structure and Content of Agreements Between the Agency and States Required in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. 1972.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Mayhew et al. Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. *How States Benefit from Amending or Rescinding Small Quantities Protocols*. 2022.

<sup>121</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Harmonizing the Minimum Nuclear Non-Proliferation Commitments of States in the Middle East*. 2025.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Bino et al. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Middle East WMD-Free Zone Project Final Report*. 2023.

<sup>124</sup> Divsallar. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East: The Role of the WMD-Free Zone Initiative*. 2025.

<sup>125</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Harmonizing the Minimum Nuclear Non-Proliferation Commitments of States in the Middle East*. 2025.

<sup>126</sup> Bino et al. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Middle East WMD-Free Zone Project Final Report*. 2023.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Divsallar. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East: The Role of the WMD-Free Zone Initiative*. 2025.



Regional NWFZ treaty development processes demonstrate that building confidence through cooperation and verification can serve as a foundation for comprehensive global non-proliferation measures.<sup>129</sup> The 1967 *Treaty of Tlatelolco* in Latin America showed that regional cooperation and voluntary transparency measures can create enduring non-proliferation commitments, even between former adversaries.<sup>130</sup> The 1996 *Treaty of Pelindaba* in Africa proved that promoting peaceful nuclear cooperation and establishing verification mechanisms through local organisations, such as the African Commission on Nuclear Energy, can lead to successful NWFZ establishment.<sup>131</sup> IAEA played a key role in those processes by providing a suite of services, including traineeship programmes, impartial verification mechanisms, and technical support to ensure peaceful nuclear activities.<sup>132</sup> General Assembly resolution 79/241 on “Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in All Its Aspects” emphasized the potential of regional dialogue and collaboration as tools for establishing additional NWFZs and supporting global disarmament efforts.<sup>133</sup>

Following the 2022 IAEA General Conference, the agency released its 2023 report on the *Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East*, which underscored the need for full implementation of standard safeguards as a precondition for advancing toward a regional NWFZ.<sup>134</sup> The annual 2023 IAEA report notes that regional governments' compliance with IAEA protocols varies: one state has not signed the NPT, another has not implemented any safeguards, and four states have signed additional protocols to the NPT but have not yet put them into effect.<sup>135</sup> NWFZ treaty development processes, such as the 1967 *Treaty of Tlatelolco* in Latin America, demonstrate that flexible ratification processes and phased entry into force can help transcend regional divides and encourage greater involvement.<sup>136</sup> Similarly, the 2022 report of the Secretary-General states that United Nations-led mediation efforts on non-proliferation and disarmament in the Middle East have shown that progress in complex regional issues necessitates constant diplomatic involvement and trust-building approaches.<sup>137</sup>

## Conclusion

The successful implementation of NWFZs in other regions highlights the necessity for cooperation and transparency in the Middle East through the utilization of transparent regional dialogue and consensus towards safeguard and compliance measures.<sup>138</sup> Continued transparency measures, IAEA compliance efforts, and inclusive regional dialogue are paramount to moving towards the establishment of an NWFZ

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<sup>129</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in All Its Aspects (A/RES/79/241)*. 2024.

<sup>130</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Treaties. *Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Tlatelolco)*. 1967.

<sup>131</sup> United Nations Platform for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. *Treaty of Pelindaba*. N.d.

<sup>132</sup> Suseanu. International Atomic Energy Agency Bulletin. *IAEA Safeguards under Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaties*. 2021.

<sup>133</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in All Its Aspects (A/RES/79/241)*. 2024.

<sup>134</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East (GC(67)/17)*. 2023.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs Treaties. *Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Tlatelolco)*. 1967.

<sup>137</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Secretary-General on the Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East (A/77/153 (Part I))*. 2022.

<sup>138</sup> United Nations Platform for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. *Overview of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones*. N.d.



in the Middle East.<sup>139</sup> Middle East Member States can draw upon the successes of other established NWFZs to foster continued dialogue and efforts towards establishing an NWFZ in the near future.<sup>140</sup> Limited regional consensus on the adoption and practice of safeguards and compliance measures has further limited the progression of establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East.<sup>141</sup> Following the 2022 NPT Review Conference, Member States and IAEA representatives acknowledged that the lack of progress towards adopting an NWFZ is due to disagreements on safeguards implementation.<sup>142</sup> In addition to the limited consensus-building surrounding the advancement and establishment of the NWFZ in the region, continuous conflicts have contributed to continued limited trust among Member States.<sup>143</sup> Phased approaches to implementing regional NWFZs elsewhere have allowed for full implementation and disarmament, which further fosters trust amongst Member States.<sup>144</sup> By maintaining open dialogue and encouraging the use of regional safeguards, Member States can further the discussion and trust needed to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East.<sup>145</sup>

### **Further Research**

As delegates conduct further research, they should consider: How are ongoing conflicts limiting progress toward establishing a Middle East NWFZ? What role can civil society play in promoting regional dialogue and education to advance the establishment of a Middle East NWFZ? Are variations in adherence and implementation of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East impacting the advancement of establishing an NWFZ? What mechanisms could further improve compliance and transparency methods? Can lessons from the establishment of other NWFZs be applied and implemented to address the challenges of establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East?

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<sup>139</sup> Carlson. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Nuclear Verification in a Middle East WMD Free Zone*. 2021.

<sup>140</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and Their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts (A/79/224)*. 2024.

<sup>141</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East (GC(67)/17)*. 2023.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and Their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts (A/79/224)*. 2024.

<sup>144</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in All Its Aspects (A/RES/79/241)*. 2024.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.



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## 2. Safeguards and Verification Mechanisms for Nuclear Disarmament

*“Let us remember that you are here not simply to avoid a nuclear nightmare, but to build a safer world for all.”<sup>146</sup>*

### Introduction

Nuclear disarmament safeguard and verification mechanisms address the risks of existing stockpiles and the existential threat of nuclear armed conflict in a world with more than 12 thousand nuclear warheads still in use.<sup>147</sup> China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States currently possess different degrees of military nuclear capabilities and amounts of operationally available warheads.<sup>148</sup> The latter two account for the majority of atomic weapons.<sup>149</sup> United Nations Member States are collectively working in various international negotiation formats inside and outside the United Nations system to affirm nuclear disarmament as a means to reduce international tensions.<sup>150</sup>

Five nuclear-weapon states (NWS) pledged to systematically contain the nuclear threat as State parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (1970).<sup>151</sup> Member States in subsequent frameworks agreed upon various nuclear disarmament verification (NDV) mechanisms to collect, interpret, use, and mutually assess if disclosed nuclear weapons-graded material is actually made inoperable.<sup>152</sup> Concerning the constant international review of the NPT, Member States in 2010 reaffirmed the fundamental role of United Nations-based actors like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) play in ensuring the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear material.<sup>153</sup>

High-level United Nations decision makers are observing an increased emphasis on nuclear weapons in security strategies and growing distrust ahead of the five-year Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in 2026.<sup>154</sup> NWS in 2022 at the United Nations Security Council phrased the imperative not to make use of nuclear weapons but de-prioritize nuclear disarmament regimes presently, nevertheless.<sup>155</sup> For example, the expiration of the *Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms* (New START) (2010) in 2026 contributes to the current uncertainty and low transparency in verification endeavors.<sup>156</sup> Russia and

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<sup>146</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *2015 NPT Review Conference*. 2015.

<sup>147</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *What is nuclear disarmament?* N.d.

<sup>148</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Yearbook 2025. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Summary*. 2025. p. 8.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>150</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing our Common Future. An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 17.

<sup>151</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaties Database: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. N.d.

<sup>152</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues. Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/120)*. 2023. p. 11.

<sup>153</sup> 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Final Document. Volume I*. 2010. p. 3.

<sup>154</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN pushes disarmament talks amid fears that drums of nuclear war are beating again*. 2023; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Yearbook 2025. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Summary*. 2025. p. 8.

<sup>155</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Our Common Agenda : Policy Brief 9 : A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. p. 16.

<sup>156</sup> Arms Control Association. *Talks About New START Still Haven’t Started*. 2025.



the United States would lose key mechanisms of arms control and negatively affect the disarmament control architecture as a whole.<sup>157</sup> The United Kingdom and France reaffirmed the strategic importance of their nuclear forces and introduced cooperation efforts in the *Northwood Declaration (2025)*.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, the nuclear arsenal of China is reported to be the fastest growing of all NWS in relative numbers.<sup>159</sup> Due to these developments, NWS with large nuclear arsenals take up a central role in upcoming talks on nuclear disarmament within the NPT framework.<sup>160</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

The General Assembly identified nuclear disarmament as a leading goal of the United Nations, demonstrating its dedication to a nuclear-weapon-free world and the imminent threat of their potential use.<sup>161</sup> At the inception of the United Nations on 24 January 1946, the General Assembly adopted its first resolution 1 (1), which established the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) to address challenges posed by the discovery of atomic energy.<sup>162</sup> UNAEC was tasked with controlling atomic energy by exchanging basic scientific information and limiting its use to peaceful purposes.<sup>163</sup> To ease international tension and strengthen trust between Member States, the commission proposed that the removal of atomic weapons, alongside the implementation of safeguards, would be essential for the maintenance of international peace and security.<sup>164</sup>

Under resolutions 1378 (XIV) on “General and Complete Disarmament,” and with the adoption of the NPT, the General Assembly put complete disarmament under effective international control.<sup>165</sup> Resolution 1378 (XIV) pinned the challenge of nuclear weapons on the United Nations’ agenda and placed all disarmament efforts under a single comprehensive framework.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, resolution 1378 (XIV) catalyzed new negotiations and led to the creation of the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee, which later evolved into the Conference on Disarmament (CD).<sup>167</sup> In 1968, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2373 XXII on the “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons”, which was later ratified in 1970.<sup>168</sup> The NPT is the central framework governing a global approach to non-proliferation, and is guided

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<sup>157</sup> Arms Control Association. *Talks About New START Still Haven’t Started*. 2025; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Yearbook 2025. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Summary*. 2025. p. 8, 12.

<sup>158</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, and The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP. *Northwood Declaration: 10 July 2025 (UK-France joint nuclear statement)*. 2025; Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale. *National Strategic Review 2025*. 2025. p. 12.

<sup>159</sup> Singh. *The Diplomat. China’s Growing Nuclear Buildup and the Global Nuclear Outlook*. 2025.

<sup>160</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Our Common Agenda: Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. p. 16.

<sup>161</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons 26 September*. N.d.

<sup>162</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy (A/RES/1(1))*. 1946.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373(XXII))*. 1968.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid; United Nations, General Assembly. *General and Complete Disarmament (A/RES/1378(XIV))*. 1959.

<sup>166</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *General and Complete Disarmament (A/RES/1378(XIV))*. 1959. p. 3.

<sup>167</sup> United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs. *Conference on Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>168</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373(XXII))*. 1968.



by its core pillars of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful use of atomic energy.<sup>169</sup> Article 3 mandates that non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) must accept the negotiated comprehensive safeguard agreements (CSA) with IAEA, while Article 6 commits all parties to pursue disarmament in good faith.<sup>170</sup> Article 8 of the NPT established the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT (Review Conference), which meets every five years to assess implementation and discuss amendments.<sup>171</sup>

Bilateral agreements between NWS are a foundation for stronger nuclear verification measures, reinforcing the legitimacy of shared disarmament goals.<sup>172</sup> In 1987, United States President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev signed the *Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty* (INF).<sup>173</sup> It eliminated all ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles, which ranged from five hundred to five thousand kilometres.<sup>174</sup> This was during the final years of the Cold War, and was used to de-escalate the rising tension and nuclear arms race in Europe.<sup>175</sup> The *Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty I* (START) (1991) was the first significant agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States that required both parties to significantly reduce their individual nuclear warheads.<sup>176</sup> The dissolution of the Soviet Union gave rise to new concerns about nuclear weapon theft, sale, and control.<sup>177</sup> The *Lisbon Protocol* (1992) alleviated some of this pressure by establishing special regulations for State parties to the START agreement.<sup>178</sup> In April 2010, New START was signed in Prague by the United States and Russia, and entered into force in February 2011 as the successor framework of START.<sup>179</sup> The main text provides detailed definitions, more specific verification measures, and specific numerical expectations for the reductions required from Russia and the USA.<sup>180</sup> In line with the goal of complete disarmament, the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (TPNW), which came into effect in January 2021, prohibited the possession, testing, manufacturing, or transfer of nuclear explosive devices.<sup>181</sup>

Additional international legal instruments have been developed to restrict nuclear testing, possession, and proliferation in support of global disarmament objectives.<sup>182</sup> The *Treaty of Pelindaba* (1995), known as the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, was another landmark agreement from the continent, which was Africa's way of contributing to the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.<sup>183</sup> Further multilateral treaties that aimed at eliminating specific categories of nuclear weapons as a way to solidify the goals towards disarmament and non-proliferation include the *1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in*

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. pp. 5-6.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>172</sup> Kimball Arms Control Association. *The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty at a glance*. 2019.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Department of State. Office of the Historian. *The Collapse of the Soviet Union*. N.d.

<sup>177</sup> Reif. Arms Control Association. *The Lisbon Protocol at a Glance*. 2020.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Liang, Arms Control Association. *New START at a Glance*. 2024.

<sup>180</sup> Department of State. *New START Treaty*. N.d

<sup>181</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Test in the Atmosphere, in Outerspace and Underwater*. 1963

<sup>182</sup> Arms Control Association. *Treaties and Agreements*. N.d.

<sup>183</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba)*. 1995.



*the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water* (PTBT).<sup>184</sup> Article 1 of the *Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty* (CTBT) (1995) forbids the testing of nuclear weapons, and Article 12 establishes a conference designed to bring global acclaim and acceptance for the ratification of the treaty.<sup>185</sup> The CTBT underlines that the cessation of all nuclear test explosions constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and builds confidence that any nuclear test would be reliably detected.<sup>186</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

As outlined in Article 8 of the NPT, Member States convene a Review Conference every five years to evaluate the treaty's operations and assess progress in implementation.<sup>187</sup> During these conferences, the body also offers recommendations and proposes amendments that can be annexed to the NPT.<sup>188</sup> For instance, State parties at the 1995 Review Conference agreed to extend the NPT indefinitely.<sup>189</sup> The indefinite extension was a package deal that reaffirmed and strengthened NWS's commitments.<sup>190</sup> The deal included making systemic and progressive efforts, reducing nuclear warheads, acknowledging the NPT as the only binding multilateral treaty for nuclear disarmament, and outlining a future program on objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.<sup>191</sup> The 2000 Review Conference outcome document proposed 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament, including the early entry into force of the CTBT and the immediate commencement of negotiations on a future Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).<sup>192</sup> The 2010 Review Conference was the last to provide a substantive outcome where NWS expressed their commitments towards eliminating their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament.<sup>193</sup> Review conferences in 2005 and 2015 summits failed to deliver a final document.<sup>194</sup> This failure was mainly due to opposing views on nuclear disarmament, therefore weakening the review process as a means of accountability.<sup>195</sup>

IAEA and United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) play a central role in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.<sup>196</sup> The emergence of advanced nuclear technology, technological

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<sup>184</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Test in the Atmosphere, in Outerspace and Underwater*. 1963.

<sup>185</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)*. 1996.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373(XXII))*. 1968. p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>189</sup> Immenkamp. European Parliamentary Research Service. *Tenth NPT Review Conference. Nuclear Weapons Threat at an all High*. 2022. p.2.

<sup>190</sup> Kimball et al. Arms Control Association. *The NPT in 1995: The Terms for Indefinite Extension*. 2020.

<sup>191</sup> Rydell. Arms Control Association. *Looking Back: The 1995 Nuclear Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference*. 2005.

<sup>192</sup> Kimball et al. Arms Control Association. *U.S Implementation of the "13 Practical Steps on Nonproliferation and Disarmament" Agreed to at the 2000 NPT Review Conference*. 2002; 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Final Document. Volume I*. 2000.

<sup>193</sup> 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Final Document. Volume I*. 2010. p. 19.

<sup>194</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *The 2015 NPT Review Conference: Setting the Record Straight*. 2015.

<sup>195</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. 2025.

<sup>196</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *The NPT and IAEA safeguards Serving Nuclear Non-Proliferation*. 2025.



developments in the field of safeguards, experience, and efficiency improvements in safeguard measures require that both organizations support disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.<sup>197</sup> IAEA is a United Nations specialized organization that focuses on non-proliferation and reports to both the General Assembly and the Security Council.<sup>198</sup> IAEA develops standards for nuclear safety and promotes the safe use of nuclear energy.<sup>199</sup> This is done through CSA, verifying that Member States comply with commitments to use nuclear material and facilities solely for peaceful purposes.<sup>200</sup> An annual report is provided, which includes briefings extending to quarterly country-specific reports and aims at raising awareness towards a Member State's nuclear activity and their compliance with non-proliferation standards.<sup>201</sup> The 2023 annual report calls for nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and IAEA's presence at all its nuclear sites amidst the ongoing armed conflict there.<sup>202</sup> The body conducted a comprehensive safety review at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station in Japan and concluded that the discharge process was consistent with international safety standards.<sup>203</sup> UNODA is at the center of global efforts to promote, support, and implement NDV.<sup>204</sup> It shapes policy and enables practical verification of progress by convening states and supporting expert initiatives.<sup>205</sup> UNODA reports directly to the United Nations General Assembly and the Secretary-General.<sup>206</sup>

General Assembly documents and reports present a detailed picture of the positions and views Member States show in terms of NDV and point to existing legal frameworks as models for future improvements.<sup>207</sup> The Group of Governmental Experts to further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues (GGE) was established by General Assembly resolution 74/50 (2019) to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues.<sup>208</sup> The final report of the GGE in General Assembly resolution 78/120 (2023) outlines the expert's discussion on NDV and provides working definitions, objectives, and confidence-building measures for the continued work on verification and related issues.<sup>209</sup> Additionally, the Secretary-General's Mechanism was created in 1987 and establishes important international procedures for standardized protocols and impartial investigations into alleged uses of chemical and biological weapons.<sup>210</sup> This mechanism is supported administratively by the UNODA and illustrates the United Nations' effectiveness in conducting rapid and neutral investigations when treaty-based verification processes are politically blocked or insufficient.<sup>211</sup> The United Nations also collaborates with relevant organizations like the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) to develop

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *What is nuclear disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>201</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Perspective Human Stories*. 2025.

<sup>202</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Annual Report: Atoms for Peace and Development*. 2023. p.27

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. p.28

<sup>204</sup> United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). *About Us*. 2025.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Nuclear Disarmament (A/RES/79/50)*. 2024. p. 1; United Nations, General Assembly. *Nuclear Disarmament Verification. Report of the Secretary-General (A/79/93)*. 2024.

<sup>208</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Nuclear Disarmament Verification (A/RES/74/50)*. 2019. p 2.

<sup>209</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues (A/78/120)*. 2023. p.9.

<sup>210</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons (A/RES/42/37)*. 1987. pp. 71-72; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Secretary General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons (UNSGM)*. N.d.

<sup>211</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Secretary General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons (UNSGM)*. N.d.



and test real-world verification tools and introduce innovative procedures.<sup>212</sup> The IPNDV is especially crucial because it bridges the gap between NWS and NNWS, building confidence by establishing a common technical vocabulary and understanding of challenges.<sup>213</sup> Non-governmental organizations (NGO) like the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) also advocate for the reduction of nuclear risks and engage in public-private partnerships for nuclear activities monitoring.<sup>214</sup>

### **Maintaining nuclear disarmament agreements among NWS and with NNWS**

The provisions of NPT Article 6 led Member States to negotiate the adoption of bilateral and multilateral agreements.<sup>215</sup> However, ongoing armed conflicts and a mounting lack of trust among Member States currently limit the establishment of a shared framework for nuclear disarmament.<sup>216</sup> The global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture benefits from maintaining nuclear disarmament agreements among NWS and NNWS.<sup>217</sup> This task, however, grows increasingly complex as political, technical, and procedural challenges grow.<sup>218</sup> The provision of the NPT to negotiate in good faith on effective measures towards the cessation of nuclear arms races has driven sustained efforts towards bilateral and multilateral nuclear arms reduction over the past five decades.<sup>219</sup>

The trajectory of New START from its adoption in 2010 highlights the value of thorough verification measures in reducing mistrust and the fragility of bilateral agreements.<sup>220</sup> The 2010 Review Conference welcomed the adoption of New START between the USA and Russia.<sup>221</sup> With this milestone, both parties can measure compliance, given that New START placed verifiable ceilings on strategic nuclear warheads and launchers.<sup>222</sup> The agreement includes verification provisions like the National Technical Means for satellites and sensors, up to 18 annual inspections on US or Russian ground, extensive data exchanges, notifications, and a bilateral consultative commission to resolve any arising implementation issues.<sup>223</sup> In 2023, Russia suspended its participation in New START due to the ongoing armed conflict with Ukraine and disputes over claims of procedural errors in the verification processes.<sup>224</sup> Though it did not withdraw from the treaty entirely, there are no operations or verification provisions for the current bilateral agreement.<sup>225</sup> At the Third Preparatory Committee of the 2026 Review Conference, the European Union

<sup>212</sup> International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. *Verification of Nuclear Disarmament. Insights from a Decade of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification*. 2024. pp. 36-44.

<sup>213</sup> Department of State. *International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV)*. N.d.

<sup>214</sup> The Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Priorities*. 2025.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>217</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373(XXII))*. 1968. p. 5.

<sup>218</sup> Department of State. Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability. *2024 Report to Congress on Implementation of the New START Treaty*. 2025

<sup>219</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. 2025.

<sup>220</sup> Department of State. *New START Treaty*. N.d.

<sup>221</sup> 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Final Document. Volume I*. 2010. p. 14.

<sup>222</sup> Department of State. *New START Treaty*. N.d.

<sup>223</sup> Department of State. *Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*. 2010. pp. 10-11.

<sup>224</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies. *Russia Suspends New START and Increases Nuclear Risks*. 2023.

<sup>225</sup> Department of State. Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability. *2024 Report to Congress on Implementation of the New START Treaty*. 2025.



(EU) urged adherence to bilateral agreements and called for consideration of special responsibility for NWS that held the largest nuclear arsenals.<sup>226</sup>

Innovative technologies prevent the potential disclosure of proliferative information during NDV, but the danger of revealing security-related secrets against nuclear states remains.<sup>227</sup> One of the most significant technical and political challenges is designing procedures that can confirm disarmament of nuclear weapons without exposing sensitive or proliferative information about how those weapons are constructed or function.<sup>228</sup> To address these challenges, the Trilateral Initiative was formed by the United States, Russia, and IAEA in 1996.<sup>229</sup> It was tasked with developing a verification system where the two states could submit classified forms of weapon origin missiles to IAEA to avoid disclosing sensitive information.<sup>230</sup> In 2002, the initiative fell short due to changes in the political environment.<sup>231</sup> These systems are crucial in maintaining the security of NWS and preventing further proliferation of nuclear weapon know-how.<sup>232</sup> To that end, UNODA organizes meetings of the General Assembly, the Disarmament Commission, and cooperates with the GGE to advance technical and political consensus on verification solutions.<sup>233</sup>

Shared efforts between NWS and NNWS on NDV showcase that regional collaboration can help in overcoming technical and procedural doubts of disarmament verification.<sup>234</sup> Transparency concerns between NWS and NNWS were considered in the 2010 Review Conference, which emphasized NWS' commitment to enhance transparency and reduce the risk of accidental use of nuclear weapons.<sup>235</sup> When NWS and NNWS engage in joint verification projects, it creates opportunities for direct participation, mutual learning, and the establishment of common practices.<sup>236</sup> IPNDV is one such partnership that brings together both NWS and NNWS to identify potential solutions to the complex verification processes.<sup>237</sup> The efforts of EU Member States are another example that demonstrates how shared work fosters mutual trust.<sup>238</sup> The Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership aims at standardizing pathways to overcome technical challenges in verification and consists of NWS, like the United Kingdom and the

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<sup>226</sup> European External Action Service. *EU Statement - Third Preparatory Committee for the 11th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT): Cluster I*. 2025.

<sup>227</sup> Verification Research, Training and Information Centre. *The IAEA and Nuclear Disarmament Verification: A Primer*. 2015. p. 7.

<sup>228</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *The NPT and IAEA safeguards*. 2025.

<sup>229</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security. Operationalizing Nuclear Disarmament Verification*. 2019. pp. 6,7.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.* p.7.

<sup>232</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *The NPT and IAEA safeguards*. 2025.

<sup>233</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues. Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/120)*. 2023; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament in the General Assembly*. N.d.

<sup>234</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues. Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/120)*. 2023. p. 10.

<sup>235</sup> 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Final Document. Volume I*. 2010. p. 21.

<sup>236</sup> Department of State. *International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV)*. N.d.

<sup>237</sup> Department of State. *International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV)*. N.d.

<sup>238</sup> 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *The Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership: Working paper submitted by Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America*. 2021. p.2.



United States, as well as NNWS, like Norway and Sweden.<sup>239</sup> The GGE also highlights that regional partnerships such as the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership are effective vehicles for building technical capacity and developing trust and practical tools for credible NDV.<sup>240</sup> A major challenge is missing expertise because effective NDV requires technical know-how, which many states may lack and hence be unable to carry out any complex verification activities.<sup>241</sup>

### **Capturing fissile material production for nuclear disarmament**

In preparation for the 2026 Review Conference, some Member States have been calling to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or place stronger measures on their permanent capture under IAEA safeguards to verify that no nuclear weapons are produced in the future.<sup>242</sup> Fissile materials, primarily highly-enriched uranium (HEU), and plutonium, are the key components for nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices.<sup>243</sup> The IAEA aims to achieve nuclear non-proliferation objectives by ensuring that nuclear material or facilities subject to its safeguards are used for peaceful purposes.<sup>244</sup> General Assembly report 73/159 on “High-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group” proposed measures, including the declaration of all HEU and plutonium separation facilities and subjecting them to continuous oversight.<sup>245</sup> Additionally, established production activities, like HEU and plutonium reprocessing, would be declared, monitored, and verified to confirm that no fissile material is illegally produced for weaponization.<sup>246</sup> Friends of FMCT is a cross-regional group of twelve Member States that was launched in September 2024 to expand support for an FMCT negotiation.<sup>247</sup>

The prospective establishment of the FMCT centers around the aspect of non-discrimination between NWS and NNWS.<sup>248</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/75 (1993) on “General and complete disarmament” initiated the deliberations on a future FMCT treaty.<sup>249</sup> It establishes a negotiation mandate to ensure that the FMCT applies equally to all Member States, thereby reinforcing fairness, legitimacy, and universal adherence.<sup>250</sup> Member States are called to manifest their commitments for a non-discriminatory and well-defined international or multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.<sup>251</sup> The prohibition would be binding for NWS, NNWS, as well as other Member States outside the NPT framework, therefore extending the treaty’s reach.<sup>252</sup> The treaty’s aim would be to not only halt future production of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium but also to encourage Member States to contribute to easing international tension for international peace and

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>240</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues. Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/120)*. 2023. p. 16.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. p.16

<sup>242</sup> Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Chair’s summary*. 2024. p. 7.

<sup>243</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Fissile material*. N.d.

<sup>244</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Safeguards Serving Nuclear Non-Proliferation*. 2025. pp. 4-9.

<sup>245</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *High-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. Note by the Secretary-General. (A/73/159)*. 2018. pp. 12-13.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. pp. 17-18.

<sup>247</sup> Arms Control Association. *Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) at a Glance*. 2024.

<sup>248</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *General and complete disarmament (A/RES/48/75)*. 1993. p.15.

<sup>249</sup> Arms Control Association. *Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) at a Glance*. 2024.

<sup>250</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *General and complete disarmament (A/RES/48/75)*. 1993. p.15.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. p.15.

<sup>252</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *High-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. Note by the Secretary-General (A/73/159)*. 2018. pp. 15-17.



security.<sup>253</sup> FMCT-defined safeguards would serve as another confidence-building measure, in which Member States could demonstrate, and other states be assured, that nuclear material is being used for peaceful purposes.<sup>254</sup> Member States that adopt CSA under the auspices of the IAEA are at liberty to manage fissile material, but are subject to inspections to ensure that nuclear material is declared and used for peaceful purposes.<sup>255</sup> NNWS owning undeclared weapons-grade nuclear material would be in breach of its CSA with IAEA.<sup>256</sup> Such violations of undeclared possessions would also challenge the integrity of the NPT by undermining their desire to strengthen trust between Member States in nuclear disarmament.<sup>257</sup>

No common ground has yet been found among NWS to hold negotiations for a FMCT.<sup>258</sup> Even though many Member States support the FMCT as a vital step towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, key NWS remain hesitant or opposed, primarily due to concerns over the treaty's scope, verification measures, and implications for existing nuclear arsenals.<sup>259</sup> This deadlock is reflected in the stalled proceedings within the CD.<sup>260</sup> Disagreements on whether the treaty should also cover existing stockpiles versus solely banning future production have prevented consensus on a program of work for the FMCT negotiations.<sup>261</sup> In March 1995, an ad hoc committee was established by the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate the FMCT, but a lack of consensus over verification provisions brought them to a standstill.<sup>262</sup> The 2000 Review conference produced a final document that stressed the necessity to negotiate the FMCT in step 3, but those negotiations were never launched.<sup>263</sup> In 2006, the USA submitted an FMCT proposal to the CD with a fifteen-year ban on HEU and plutonium.<sup>264</sup> However, it only applied to NWS and did not include any verification measures.<sup>265</sup> The present condition reveals that several State parties to the NPT have ongoing security concerns about the FMCT's impact on their strategic deterrence capabilities, especially regarding their existing weapons-grade fissile material stockpile.<sup>266</sup>

Despite decades of progress, a notable global stockpile of HEU still exists, estimated at over 1,300 metric tons, according to the International Panel on Fissile Materials.<sup>267</sup> The FMCT's potential establishment

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<sup>253</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *General and complete disarmament (A/RES/48/75)*. 1993. p. 2.

<sup>254</sup> National Nuclear Security Administration. Office of Nonproliferation and Arms Control. *Introduction to International Safeguards*. N.d. p. 6.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>257</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373(XXII))*. 1968. p 5.

<sup>258</sup> Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Towards a fissile material cut-off treaty: advancing the objective of stopping fissile material production for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in the 2026 Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle: Working paper submitted by Argentina, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Japan, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and the European Union*. 2024. p. 2.

<sup>259</sup> The Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Proposed Fissile Material (Cut-off) Treaty (FMCT)*. 2025.

<sup>260</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Taking Stock of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty*. 2024.

<sup>261</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Taking Stock of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty*. 2024.

<sup>262</sup> Arms Control Association. *Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) at a Glance*. 2024.

<sup>263</sup> Arms Control Association. *U.S Implementation of the "13 Practical Steps on Nonproliferation and Disarmament" Agreed to at the 2000 NPT Review Conference*. 2002

<sup>264</sup> Arms Control Association. *Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) at a Glance*. 2024.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> The Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Proposed Fissile Material (Cut-off) Treaty (FMCT)*. 2025.

<sup>267</sup> Federal Foreign Office. *Toward Nuclear Disarmament: Building up Transparency and Verification*. 2021. p. 56.



would be seen as a critical step in formally addressing this challenge by halting additional fissile material production, constraining nuclear arsenal expansion, and providing more confidence-building measures internationally.<sup>268</sup> In its most comprehensive form, the FMCT would encompass verification and enforcement provisions to capture all future production of fissile material by NWS, including HEU and plutonium separation activities.<sup>269</sup> It could also provide a mechanism to potentially reduce existing stockpiles of fissile material held by NWS, reinforcing disarmament alongside non-proliferation.<sup>270</sup> There is a correlation between the hesitation of NWS in reducing existing stockpiles and their concerns about the proliferation of sensitive national security information.<sup>271</sup> Verification measures need to be thoroughly defined to ease and address such concerns.<sup>272</sup>

## Conclusion

The next scheduled five-year Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in 2026 comes at a time of growing securitization processes among Member States and the overall expectation to adopt a substantive outcome document for nuclear disarmament.<sup>273</sup> Almost 60 years after its adoption, the NPT still is the basis of bilateral and multilateral negotiations towards decreasing the number of nuclear warheads of NWS, as well as ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear material.<sup>274</sup> UNODA and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) report to the United Nations General Assembly in a regular manner on disarmament affairs and facilitate such negotiation processes alongside public-private partnerships.<sup>275</sup> NGOs like NTI underline the necessity of nuclear abolition as the goal of all negotiations within the NPT framework.<sup>276</sup> However, NWS and NNWS disagree on how to achieve it and show a lack of confidence-building between each other as a necessary prerequisite.<sup>277</sup>

## Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can the 2026 Review Conference ensure progress regarding nuclear disarmament? How can international organizations establish such implementation processes that were defined by the different forums and frameworks? Which Member State prioritizes and has ratified which framework document? How did they position themselves in the Preparatory Committees preceding the 2026 Review Conference? How can United Nations bodies and NGOs help in nuclear disarmament verification and safeguards?

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<sup>268</sup> Delpuch et al. United National Institute for Disarmament Research. *Halting the Production of Fissile Materials for Nuclear Weapons*. 1994. p.17, 77.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid . p. 48-49.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid. p.48.

<sup>271</sup> Arms Control Association. *Can a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty be Effectively Verified?* N.d.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN pushes disarmament talks amid fears that drums of nuclear war are beating again*. 2023.

<sup>274</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. 2025.

<sup>275</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Affairs. *Activities and operations of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (A/RES/79/73)*. 2024; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *About Us*. 2025; The Nuclear Threat Initiative. *About*. 2025.

<sup>276</sup> The Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Developments: 2022-2025*. 2025.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.



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