

Ban reiterates support to establish nuclear weapon-free zone in Middle East



*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.
UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe*

24 November 2012 – [Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) today reaffirmed his support to convene a United Nations-sponsored Conference attended by all the States in the Middle East with the aim of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Conference, also backed by Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, would take place next year in Finland, and would be facilitated by the Finnish Under-Secretary of State, Jaakko Laajava.

“I have worked closely with the co-conveners to support the facilitator, Mr. Jaakko Laajava,” Mr. Ban said in a statement issued by his spokesperson.

“He has conducted intensive consultations with the States of the region to prepare the convening of the conference in 2012. I have also personally engaged with the States of the region at the highest level to underline the importance of the Conference in promoting long-term regional stability, peace and security on the basis of equality.”

Mr. Ban stressed that organizing States have a collective responsibility to make

every effort to convene the conference as mandated, and said he would continue to work with them on that basis.

He also noted his full support for the proposal put forward by Mr. Laajava to conduct multilateral consultations in the shortest possible time to allow the conference to be held in early 2013.

“I encourage all States of the region to continue their constructive engagement with the facilitator,” Mr. Ban said. “I also appeal to them to seize this rare opportunity to initiate a process that entails direct engagement on security issues – a critical shortcoming at the moment – and follow-on steps leading to achieving the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the region, nuclear, chemical and biological and their delivery systems.”

The May 2010 review meeting of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – which takes place every five years – called for a UN-sponsored conference to establish a nuclear-free Middle East to be attended by all States in the region.

Ahead of the 2010 meeting, Mr. Ban had called for the number of nuclear-weapon-free zones to multiply and ultimately span the globe. “My goal – our goal – is to make the whole world a nuclear-weapon-free zone,” he stated, calling such zones the “success stories of the disarmament movement.”

Currently, there are five such zones: Latin America and the Caribbean; the South Pacific; South-East Asia; Central Asia; and Africa.