

ATHENS DIALOGUE

On

**A Middle East Zone
Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons
of Mass Destruction
as well as Their Means of Delivery (WMDFZ)**

**held at Sounion, Athens, Greece
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REPORT

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FOREWORD

Hiroshima and Nagasaki unleashed upon the world a range of horrors which made the worst brutalities of all recorded history pale into insignificance. Every rule of humanitarian law, every principle taught by the great religions, every shred of respect for the human person was lost.

The greatest intellects of the world, including Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell, speaking "as members of the human species" have warned that a war with nuclear weapons "might possibly put an end to the human race." An enormous responsibility thus devolved on every nuclear power to banish this weapon from their arsenals and work together to eliminate it from the face of the earth.

Every human being should be saddened by the fact that governments have not accepted this responsibility, which lies undischarged and unrecognised nearly seventy years after this event which shook all civilisation to its foundations.

Medieval conquerors like Attila and Jenghiz Khan are reported to have announced to all who dared to defy them that if a city stood in their way not a single home would be left standing or a single human being left alive. We have now reached a point when such savagery seems minuscule if compared with the savagery of the bomb.

It can, in one frightful moment, destroy not little villages but vast metropolitan centres, not merely human beings but every living thing down to the minutest cell, and damage not only this generation but unnumbered generations to come. It can poison the atmosphere we bequeath to those generations and cause congenital deformities for generations to come - generations whose welfare is the highest trust that all religions and all civilisations place upon us.

Yet governments continue on this course regardless, betraying this trust, abandoning our humanity and consigning to the rubbish bin all that forty centuries of civilisation, religion and human sacrifice have taught us.

When the governments of the world thus neglect their most basic obligations, all humanity walks ever closer to the nuclear abyss that will swallow up friend and foe alike. The responsibility then devolves upon all concerned citizens to do what lies in their power to save this century from becoming a century of doom. No other century has dawned with humanity having the power to destroy itself. If the 20th Century was a century of lost opportunity in regard to saving us from the nuclear peril, the 21st Century

is our century of last opportunity. If that opportunity is lost, all humanity, all civilization and all our cherished values will perish, never to be revived.

What can the concerned citizen do? Among possible courses of action are bonding together in civil society networks, highlighting the coincidence of all religious teachings in condemning such cruelty, mounting a chorus of protest strong enough to reach the corridors of power, seeking to establish a nuclear free zone, among others.

The Athens Dialogue is a significant step in this direction. It seeks to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in an area seething with tensions and misunderstandings. Both at the conceptual and practical level the discussions that took place were sober and pregnant with possibilities.

All this brings home to us the importance of initiatives such as the Athens Dialogue which aim to eliminate the bomb from an area rife with tensions and prone to conflict. The Athens Dialogue has addressed this problem at various levels both conceptually and procedurally - exploring obstacles standing in the way of such zones, examining the untenability of the concept of nuclear deterrence, analysing the transformation taking place in the Arab world, bringing inter-religious perspectives to bear on the problem, unravelling the economic and cultural factors that must be considered and working out schemes of verification.

This is indeed a substantial contribution helping us to better understand the problem and devise a scheme sufficiently comprehensive to overcome the numerous obstacles standing in its way.

The learned participants have been deeply sensitive to all the nuances of the challenge before us, directing our attention to future possibilities, and in the process bring a Middle East zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction closer to achievement.

The problems, we know, are numerous but the Athens Dialogue has brought home to the world the realisation that they are not insurmountable and that a way can be found through the thicket of difficulties towards a workable solution.

All participants are to be congratulated and in particular La Trobe University's Centre for Dialogue, Melbourne and the European Public Law Organization (EPLO) of Athens, who sponsored the Conference with the support of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and the University of Queensland.

The Dialogue is an example of the results that can be achieved if concerned individuals and groups pool their resources in this cause on which the future of humanity depends.

It is important that the necessary momentum be maintained for the implementation of the practical steps that have merged from these discussions and that this message be carried from the humblest levels of society to the pinnacles of political power.

It gives me special pleasure to write this Foreword as I have sought to advance the realisation at all levels that these weapons are illegal - from the International Court of Justice to the schoolroom. The lesson to be spread to all levels of society is that the maintenance of these weapons of mass destruction is a betrayal of our trust towards our children and future generations and that betrayal of this trust would make us the most culpable generation in all human history.

Another factor that makes this a task of the greatest urgency is that the nuclear danger grows from day to day. Scientific knowledge regarding the development of these weapons is becoming more easily accessible electronically. Scientific personnel with the knowledge needed to construct a weapon receive attractive offers from those desiring to acquire it. More states and terrorist movements see the weapon as a valuable addition to their strength. The materials for their construction are easily available and remain unmonitored. Research on improving the weapon continues. Unresolved disputes between states and other entities keep simmering. Ample funds are available to terrorist organisations for purchasing the necessary materials and hiring the requisite scientific skills.

All the available evidence supports the proposition that humanity is edging closer day by day towards its destruction through the maintenance and projected development of arsenals which should have been banned decades ago and which can still be eliminated through united, non-governmental action, of which the Athens Dialogue is an outstanding example.

CG WEERAMANTRY
Former Vice President, International Court of Justice

28 January 2013

PROJECT OUTLINE

IN NOVEMBER 2012, La Trobe University's Centre for Dialogue and the European Public Law Organization (EPLO) convened a regional dialogue in Athens on the proposal to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction as well as their means of delivery (WMDFZ).

In preparation since April 2010, the dialogue was the product of extensive consultation with key stakeholders in the Middle East as well as outside the region. Those invited to participate were drawn largely from Arab countries, Iran, Israel and Turkey. Invitations were also issued to a few others noted for their expertise or involvement in or support for the proposed UN Helsinki Conference.

It was envisaged that arising from the 'Athens Dialogue' a Report would be prepared setting out findings and recommendations. The report was to be forwarded to: the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Under-Secretary of State in Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jaakko Laajava, who is acting as the facilitator for the inter-governmental negotiations, the Russian, UK and US governments who are together the co-sponsors of the UN Helsinki Conference, and to other relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. This would be done in time for the proposed Helsinki Conference which was scheduled for December 2012. In the light of subsequent US and other announcements indicating that the Helsinki Conference would be postponed, the sponsoring organisations have included in this Report a number of observations on recent developments and reflections on prospects for future dialogue and negotiations.

The Athens Dialogue produced a number of proposals which could be taken to further the goal of security in the Middle East and assist the negotiation of a WMDFZ. These proposals, which, are even more relevant in the wake of the postponement of the Helsinki Conference, are summarised and listed as Annex A, on page 45 of this Report.

Acknowledgements

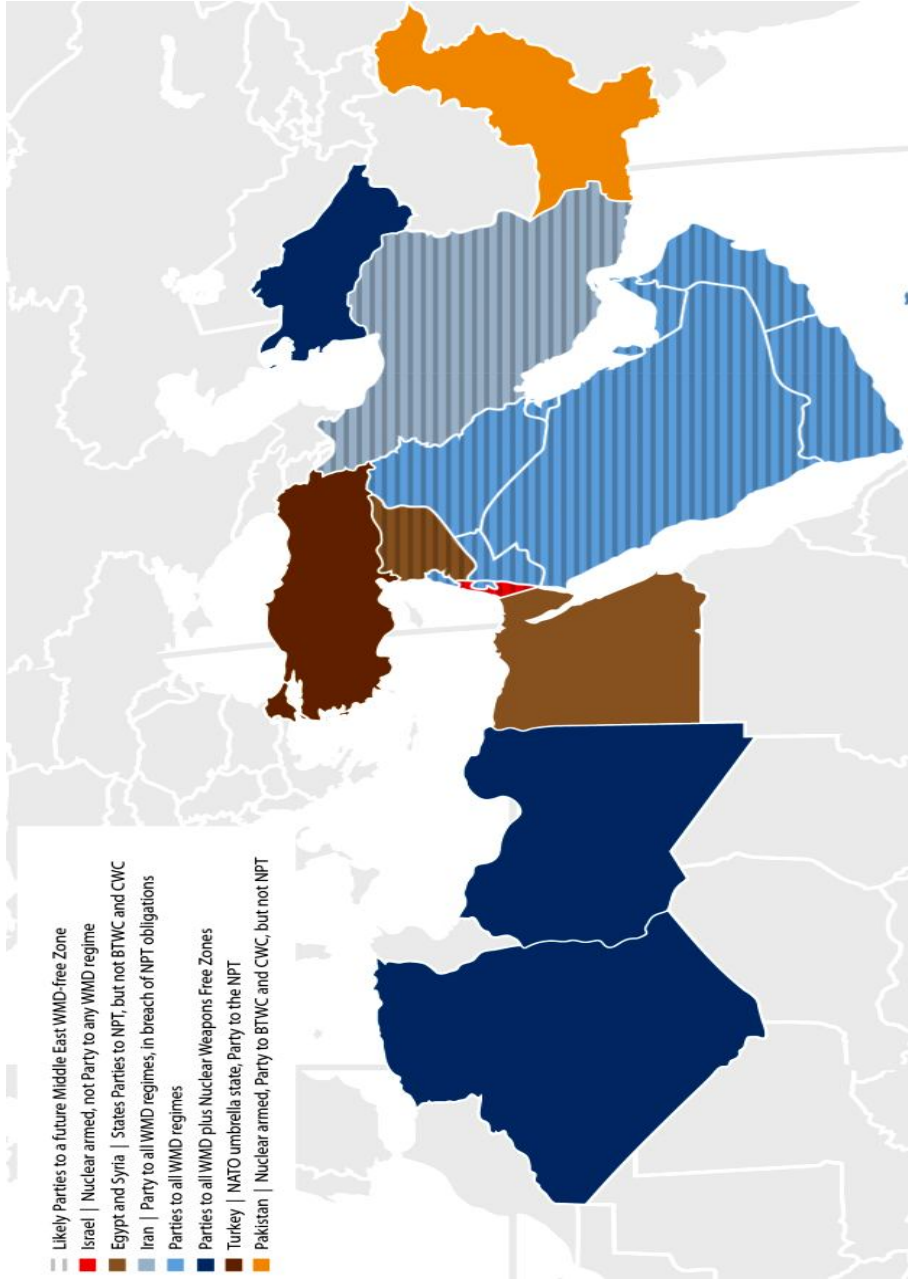
While the Centre for Dialogue initiated this project, its implementation would not have been possible without the active collaboration of the

European Public Law Organization. The La Trobe Centre for Dialogue would like to express its sincere thanks to the EPLO for agreeing to be the co-organiser of the Athens Dialogue, and for dedicating part of its staff for the successful realisation of the event. In particular, we wish to acknowledge the contribution of: Cesare Colombo, Justino De Chavez, Akis Dimogerontas, Damiano Giampaoli, George Kalathas, Edoardo Minerva, Ginevra Roli, Fani Stathoulopoulou, Kostas Vlachakis and Uta Wancke.

Special thanks need to be addressed to Ms. Piji Protopsaltis, Deputy Director for Management, and Ms. Ariadne Kopidaki, Director of Office of Central Support Services, as well as to Ms. Alessia Fiumi, Head of Office of Travel and Conferences, for their wonderful contribution to the overall success of the event.

The two sponsoring organisations also wish to acknowledge the support of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and the University of Queensland.

THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF A MIDDLE EAST WMD FZ



Source: International Law and Policy Institute (ILPI), http://nwp.ilpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/ILPI_world_map_Middle-East.png

BACKGROUND

THE PROJECT TEAM is led by Professor Joseph A. Camilleri, Professor of International Relations and Director of the Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University. Other members of the team are: Professor Michael Hamel-Green (Professor, College of the Arts, Victoria University, Melbourne); Associate Professor Marianne Hanson (School of Political Science and International Studies and Director of the Rotary Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution at the University of Queensland), Dr. Michális S. Michael (Deputy Director, Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University), Nicholas A.J. Taylor (Research Associate, Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University and Doctoral Researcher at the School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland), and Professor Spyridon Flogaitis (Director of the EPLO, Professor of Administrative Law at the University of Athens, Judge of the Special Supreme Court of Greece, former President of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and former Acting Minister of Interior of Greece in 2007 and 2009).

Why a Track-Two/Track-Three Dialogue?

Joseph Montville, an American Foreign Service Officer, first used the term 'track-two diplomacy' to refer to:

... unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversarial groups or nations with the goals of developing strategies, influencing public opinion, and organising human and material resources in ways that might help resolve the conflict.

Diplomats and other officials may participate in track-two meetings but they do so in their 'private' capacities. Track-two dialogues cannot commit governments to any particular policy or course of action, but they often have the tacit and at times practical support of one or more governments which are keen to assist the resolution of a conflict or problem, but do not feel that official channels offer at the time the most productive way of pursuing this objective. What is common to all participants of 'track-two' dialogues is that they are experts in their field, whether they be practitioners (serving or retired diplomats or policy-makers) or theorists of one kind or another (academics, specialists attached to centres, institutes and think-tanks). They are regarded as potentially influential precisely

because of the status or prestige that derives from their expertise and the fact that some if not all of them may have the ear of government.

By contrast 'track-three' fora or meetings, though they may include experts, are not solely or even primarily brought together for their expertise. Rather they encompass a range of civil society voices, which may include representatives of professional groups, religious and community organisations, and advocacy groups of one kind or another. Track-three dialogues do not include diplomats or policy-makers even in their 'private' capacities.

The 'Athens Dialogue' was designed and organised as a hybrid track-two/track-three dialogue, that is, a gathering that would have some of the features of track-two dialogues (including in particular experts and serving or retired diplomats) but at the same time integrating a key element of the track-three model, namely significant civil society representation based on criteria other than just expertise.

The facilitating team chose this model on the basis of the very extensive theoretical and practical experience of the Centre for Dialogue. This choice was based on several considerations, two of which are worth noting. First, the nature and implications of weapons of mass destruction have hitherto attracted relatively little regional engagement, and almost no engagement animated by the principles of 'dialogue', notably notions of mutual respect, readiness to listen to the other's point of view, and a capacity to explore new ways of thinking and communicating. In our assessment, previous efforts have been conducted largely as conventional workshops comprised either largely of academics and experts - at times with the added participation of a few policy-makers - or primarily as intergovernmental fora, but generally with a clear focus on the sharing of expertise or the analysis of official policy positions.

The second consideration arises from lessons drawn from initiatives in other areas, which suggest that engagement that involves not only experts of various kinds but also a wider spectrum of civil society stakeholders (including NGOs as well as religious, community and professional groups of various kinds) and members of the policy-making community can itself perform a substantial confidence-building role. Importantly, such a process can help to generate the favourable conditions needed for useful coalition building, a strategy that has proved vital to the success of a number of other international initiatives such as the Landmines Convention of 1997, the Cluster Munitions Convention in 2008, and the International Criminal Court in 2002.

This project envisages three main stages:

1. *A detailed research paper* (just published): N.A.J. Taylor, Joseph A. Camilleri and Michael Hamel-Green, Dialogue on Middle East biological, nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament: Constraints and opportunities, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 38(1), 2013, 78-98.

The article assesses the factors that have impeded negotiations thus far in order to identify the key actors whose mutually reinforcing efforts are essential to any eventual agreement. It argues that current efforts to negotiate a WMD-free zone in the Middle East can learn much from the successful negotiation of other nuclear-weapon-free zones. It acknowledges nevertheless that the circumstances in the Middle East are unique and require a more holistic approach. Success here, it is argued, will depend largely on a multidimensional perspective that brings together the energies and insights of a range of state and non-state actors, not least civil society in the Middle East, where confidence and trust building is too complex and demanding a task to be seen as the preserve of political and geostrategic calculation alone. The authors conclude that enabling the societies and polities of the region to identify areas of mistrust and misunderstanding across strategic, political, but also cultural and religious divides, in order to open up possibilities for dialogue and mutual respect, holds the key to creating a favourable negotiating environment. The published paper will be widely distributed.

2. *A Report*, presented here, which summarises the initial outcomes of the Track-Two/Track-Three Dialogue. It also includes a series of reflections by the facilitating team based in large part on extensive fieldwork in the Middle East, London, Vienna, Helsinki and Geneva conducted in November-December 2012 by Nicholas A.J. Taylor, as well as further research carried out by other members of the project team.

The report, written in accessible language and translated into Farsi, Hebrew and Arabic, is designed for widespread distribution to government officials and members of parliament of all interested countries; regional organisations, including the European Union, the African Union and the League of Arab States; key departments and agencies within the UN system; Middle East regional organisations; regional research centres and

think-tanks; and civil society groups (including media, religious and professional organisations) both in the Middle East and in countries capable of exerting influence on outcomes (in particular the United Kingdom, the United States, China, Russia and Western Europe). It is also planned to distribute the report to the Middle Eastern diaspora, particularly in Australia, Europe and North America.

3. As the next stage in the development of this project, consideration is currently being given to the preparation of a book-length monograph or a special issue of a leading international journal. The aim here is to examine in much greater depth than has thus far been the case the complex relationship between ethical principles on the one hand and political constraints and opportunities on the other, which continuing efforts to establish a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East must take into account. The focus here will be on the role of governments, multilateral organisations, business and civil society.

THE ATHENS DIALOGUE

METHOD AND PROCESS

THE Athens Dialogue had a total of 37 participants drawn largely from the Middle East (see Annex B). Apart from the Australian facilitating team (4) which conducted the dialogue, and the EPLO team, representation was as follows:

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
Australia	1 + facilitating team (4)
Bahrain	3
Cyprus	1
Egypt	4
Greece	2 + EPLO team
Iran	4
Israel	6
Italy	1
Jordan	1
Lebanon	2
Palestine	3
Russia	1
Switzerland	1
Turkey	1
Yemen	1
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>36</i>

Participants from outside the region were invited principally because of their expertise on arms control and disarmament, or because of their perceived historical or potential role in the region (*e.g.* Cyprus and Turkey). Of those who came from the Middle East (for this purpose we include Turkey), they were invited in their capacity as specialists in the field, intellectuals, leaders of civil society organisations, or acting or retired diplomats.

Where 'gaps' in participation were identified, the project team sought to fill them in the fieldwork phase of the project - by engaging a number of relevant stakeholders in discussion and exploring possible interest in future participation in the 'Athens Dialogue' project. Some gaps could not be easily filled given the prevailing political situation, notably in the case of Syria.

The 'Athens Dialogue' took place at the EPLO premises in the Cape Sounion area, a scenic spot on the Greek coast, one hour's drive from the centre of Athens. Sounion, with its harmonious blend of sea, land and Greek history - Cape Sounion is noted as the site of ruins of the ancient Greek temple of Poseidon, the god of the sea in classical mythology - offered an ideal location for the intense and sustained conversations that took place over more than two days.

To some extent, these conversations were overshadowed by two, perhaps not unconnected, developments: the resumption of armed hostilities between Israel and Hamas resulting in five Israeli and 158 Palestinian deaths, and the widely expected US announcement that the Helsinki Conference scheduled for December 2012 would be cancelled or at least postponed. Notwithstanding these unhelpful developments, and the strong emotions which they inevitably aroused amongst the participants, the dialogue proceeded as planned.

The facilitating team had always envisaged that the dialogue would steer well clear of set speeches and long presentations, and seek to foster instead a genuine interaction between the different, at times sharply divergent, perspectives and interests represented around the table. The key features of the method used for this dialogue were as follows:

1. For all plenary sessions, the 36 participants were seated in one large circle in the main conference hall - this made it possible for participants to be in direct eye contact with each other, to discern not just the intellectual but also the affective content of interventions, and importantly to gauge the mood of the meeting as a whole;

2. All plenary sessions were moderated by one or more members of the facilitating team, who were able to bring to the task their longstanding experience in the conduct of such dialogues;
3. All plenary sessions were introduced by short presentations (usually two or three), each no more than 5 minutes in duration - in each case the presenters were carefully selected to achieve a balance of views and backgrounds;
4. In addition to plenary sessions, provision was made for smaller group discussions to allow for a more detailed examination of particular issues, but also for more intense interaction - the smaller groups were formed with particular attention to the representation of views and backgrounds;
5. Both plenary and small group discussions were focused on a series of questions that had been carefully prepared by the facilitating team, and adjusted in minor ways during the course of the two days to take account of the dynamics of the dialogue.

The method and structure of the dialogue are reflected in the Programme, a copy of which appears as *Annex B*, on page 49.

CONTENT

The dialogue began by addressing a number of large questions and gradually moved to a consideration of the specific obstacles impeding the establishment of a WMD free zone in the Middle East, before finally exploring current or prospective conditions conducive to such an outcome. The main progression in the structured dialogue was from the general to the specific and from obstacles to possibilities.

Imagining the Future

In the first session of the dialogue, participants were asked to imagine what the Middle East and the various conflicts that currently dominate the regional landscape might look like five, ten, even twenty years from now on. The intention was to see how participants imagined the future might unfold and what role weapons of mass destruction might play in shaping

the course of events. Would possession of such weapons spread in the years ahead? Would attempts on the part of one or more states to acquire such weapons add fuel to the fires currently raging in the region? Would such weapons be actually used? Alternatively, might regional states have been persuaded to eliminate such weapons from the region? The twenty-year period was chosen as a way of enabling participants to think beyond the powerful constraints currently limiting the room for manoeuvre available to the key protagonists.

It is fair to say that many found this an extremely difficult exercise, with most unwilling or unable to let their imaginations run free. Any number of reasons might account for this reticence. Many preferred to focus on the security dilemma associated with the persistent absence of trust, especially between the major protagonists in regional conflicts, notably Israel, Iran, and Egypt and to a lesser extent Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states.

As one would expect, Israel as the only nuclear weapons state in the region was a focal point of discussion. For Iranian and many Arab participants, Israel's exceptionalism and consequent isolation in the region, whether self-inflicted or externally induced, was the major source of instability and conflict, and was therefore likely to prove the decisive factor in the attitudes of others to the future role of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Three relationships, each problematic in its own way, were canvassed:

- i.* Israel's relationship with Iran, which it sees as the main threat to its regional supremacy, security, and even survival;
- ii.* Israel's relationship with its Arab neighbours (particularly at the present time, the states of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, and more generally the League of Arab States and the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation); and
- iii.* The likely trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Another point that emerged from this discussion - unlikely to change in the immediate future - was the role of civil society in Israel. Despite an active (though small) peace movement, there was little expectation that Israel's security and political culture would radically change. Israel's nuclear capability remains to a great extent a taboo subject in Israeli society, and few Israelis, including those on the political left, were prepared to question the 'strategic necessity' of nuclear weapons.

The concern expressed by many was that Israel's continued unilateralism would persuade others to adopt nuclear deterrence as an attractive, even viable strategic and political option. Some argued that the unwillingness of regional states to make any serious moves towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction was in part related to the absence of an inclusive regional security framework, which alone could provide the necessary level of confidence. The underlying logic could be framed as follows: 'Since nuclear weapons had worked for Israel, why would other countries give up on the nuclear option?' Unilateralism on the part of one or more states was bound to undermine the prospect of a multilateral approach to non-proliferation. In this sense, the collapse of the Helsinki Conference process would reinforce unilateralist policies designed to match or counter Israel's nuclear capability. This could see Iran and potentially other states, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey and potentially Egypt, follow suit.

The discussion also centred on the rapid transformations under way in different parts of the Arab world (the so-called 'Arab Spring') ushered in by the Arab Revolution ('Spring'), and what the implications might be for democratisation generally, and the role of civil society in particular. Empowered in part by social media, political activism and the proliferation of civil society movements in several Arab countries were viewed by many as a cause of considerable optimism.

Participants drew attention to two phenomena. First, the rapidly rising populations of many countries are now accompanied by a much larger pool of young people who have experienced high levels of political mobilisation, and from which a new generation of leaders will emerge. For some participants the rise of Arab protest movements of the last few years was an opportunity to educate younger generations on the dangers of WMD. On the other hand, many expressed varying levels of uncertainty as to medium- to longer-term outcomes: would young people living in regions of conflict come to accept each other more readily or might levels of suspicion and mistrust increase? In this context, many referred to the complex currents simultaneously fostering moderation on the part of some and extremism on the part of others. Of particular importance would be the future role of Islam and the growth of various Islamist currents.

A few participants articulated with notable eloquence and conviction the possibility that the three Abrahamic faiths, given their shared traditions and beliefs, might be able to develop a common vision/message around the golden rule, the sanctity of life, coexistence and respect for minorities. Given the right conditions and clear leadership, religion might be able to act as a useful counter-force, neutralising or at least defusing the excesses

of religious extremism and nationalist militarism, and perhaps point the way to less violent security options, including the elimination of WMD and their means of delivery.

The WMDFZ Proposal: The Road Travelled Thus Far

As a contribution to the dialogue, the facilitating team had prepared a discussion paper which, among other things, considered the evolution of the proposal to establish a WMDFZ in the Middle East. Here we do no more than highlight a few important milestones in order to place the Athens Dialogue in its historical context.

The establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) covering the Middle East region was first formally proposed in 1974. Put forward in the form of a resolution to the UN General Assembly by Iran (in coordination with Egypt), the proposal gained support from 128 states, with only Myanmar (Burma) and Israel abstaining. Following the introduction of an Israeli counter-proposal in 1980 favouring direct negotiations between states, Egypt revised the text of its proposal making it acceptable for the first time to all states - including Israel. Remarkably, a UN General Assembly resolution in support of one NWFZ modality or another has since been passed each year without a vote. A similarly worded resolution has been passed every year at the annual IAEA General Conference since 1991.

Over time, key proponents of the Middle East NWFZ concept took the view that the region's political, strategic and cultural complexities required a specially tailored, more encompassing framework comprised of unilateral, bilateral, multilateral trade-offs and agreements. Especially significant in this regard was Egypt's offer in 1989 to become a signatory to the soon-to-be formalised Chemical Weapons Convention in return for security guarantees against the threat or use of other 'weapons of mass destruction', including nuclear weapons. The Mubarak Initiative (now increasingly being referred to as the Egyptian Initiative) subsequently extended the coverage of the proposed zone to include all biological, nuclear and chemical (BNC) weapons, later expanded to include the prohibition of ballistic missiles with a range of over 150km (WMDFZ).

Arguably, however, the impetus for a Middle East WMDFZ derived largely from the actions of great powers and within multilateral fora. Following intensive lobbying by Iran and a coalition of Arab states, the establishment of a broader WMDFZ became a core commitment of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, thereby making it possible

to extend indefinitely the NPT beyond its intended 25-year life without a vote. The resolution called upon all states in the Middle East to work towards 'the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems' and to avoid any actions 'that preclude the achievement of this objective.' This resolution built upon an earlier, lesser-known but no less important commitment to the creation of such a zone made by the US and UK governments in connection with their decision to launch the 1991 Gulf War.

The Middle East WMDFZ concept has since gained the support of a wide range of international commissions and initiatives. In 2005, the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission headed by Hans Blix stressed the importance of regional NWFZs to global security, 'particularly and most urgently in the Middle East'. Similarly in November 2009, the Australia-Japan sponsored International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament put the case even more bluntly, arguing that 'serious movement' towards the creation of a WMDFZ in the Middle East would 'make or break' the viability of the entire NPT regime. It is against this backdrop that the 2010 NPT RevCon concluded with a unanimous statement calling for a special conference to be hosted and facilitated outside of the region by December 2012.

In accounting for the current state of play and the difficulties that stood in the way of an agreement, participants drew on many factors, some internal, and others external to the region. These included: 'existential threats' to the state of Israel, the psychological effect of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, the potential role of civil society in the Arab states in the post-Gaddafi, post-Mubarak era, and the socio-economic impact of escalating sanctions on the Iranian people.

While no single theme dominated the discussion, participants wanted to focus on how these factors, be they negative or positive, were likely to impact on the WMDFZ proposal generally and on the proposed Helsinki Conference in particular. Both US President Obama's public pronouncements on nuclear abolition - largely rhetorical though they might be - and the region-wide civil protests that had taken place at different times in the Arab countries, but also in Israel and Egypt, were variously presented by different participants as factors that might assist the negotiation and eventual establishment of a Middle East WMDFZ.

On the other hand, mistrust and fear were widely cited as impacting negatively on the prospects of the WMDFZ proposal. Some stressed the Israeli hard line in the Netanyahu era, others pointed to Iran's seemingly uncompromising position during the Ahmadinejad years. One of the

participants described this as a psycho-sociological phenomenon that existed across and within the countries of the region. Attempting to shed light on the high levels of mutual mistrust and suspicion, he reminded others that 'politics is made by human beings'.

In this context, the role of the Abrahamic faiths was viewed somewhat ambivalently, with some stressing positive elements (*e.g.* the ruling issued by Iran's supreme leader on the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons), others pointing to the effect that religion has had in exacerbating Israel's profound sense of insecurity.

Key Obstacles to Negotiating a WMDFZ in the Middle East

The question of obstacles was the subject of detailed discussion in three smaller breakout groups. The key problems identified by the small groups were then presented in a plenary session.

There was widespread agreement that one of the major obstacles to the WMDFZ negotiating process lay in the failure to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli and broader Arab-Israeli conflicts, or at least the multiple problems confronting any attempt to decouple the task of negotiating a WMDFZ from larger issues of regional peace. Many participants noted a related obstacle, namely, that Israel, while endorsing the concept in principle in annual UN General Assembly votes for some decades, appears to have made its involvement in WMDFZ negotiations conditional on the establishment of bilateral peace settlements with the Palestinians and its neighbours before it will agree to begin negotiating on a WMDFZ. This sentiment is reflected in Israel's statement made immediately after the 2010 NPT Review Conference resolution on the Middle East.

The Israeli attachment of preconditions to any negotiations on a WMDFZ was in and of itself widely identified as a key obstacle preventing progress. Some were of the view that if this condition continued to be applied, no progress would be made in time to avert nuclear weapons proliferation, and even potential use of nuclear weapons. It was thought unlikely that all of Israel's conflicts with its Arab or Iranian neighbours could be resolved in the short or medium term.

For some participants Israel's policy of ambiguity on nuclear possession was itself an obstacle in so far as it inhibited an open debate within Israel on the costs and benefits of nuclear deterrence. As one participant observed, 'The issue is not if Israel has or does not have nuclear weapons. Civil society knows that it does. Ambiguity has killed nuclear discourse in Israel.' Beyond Israel itself, the policy of ambiguity was believed by some

participants to have allowed Western powers to avoid giving the impression that they supported nuclear proliferation in the region.

For others a key obstacle was Israel's perceived need to guarantee its survival through the possession of nuclear weapons - in other words nuclear weapons fulfilled a major objective which was to deter or defend against existential threats to the state of Israel.

Others still preferred to express the same problem by pointing to the unwillingness of some regional states, notably Iran, to recognise the existence of the state of Israel. However, some participants drew attention to proposals by the Arab League to recognise Israel as part of a peace settlement with the Palestinians, envisaging full recognition of Israel on the basis of Israeli withdrawal from lands occupied in the 1967 Middle East War. The so-called Arab Peace Initiative, originally put forward in Beirut in 2002 and reaffirmed in 2007, was said to be still on the table.

Inevitably much of the discussion centred on the lack of trust between states and peoples. As one participant noted, 'Fear cannot be put aside because it is one of the most powerful feelings people have.' Fear in turn tended to strengthen the hand of fundamentalists and those more generally drawn to military rather than diplomatic options. In conditions of mistrust and insecurity domestic constituencies were more inclined to elect or support nationalist or fundamentalist groups prepared to pursue hardline positions that invariably placed a premium on the use of force. In the words of one participant: 'In the Islamic world, people are not convinced nuclear plans should be stopped. People want to be confident that there is a balance of fear between the nations.'

The small group discussions identified two other major problems:

- *The lack of a regional security regime* comparable to the kind of regional organisations and arrangements that exist in many other regions where NWFZs have been established (for example, Latin America, Africa, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and Central Asia) - as several participants noted, the Madrid Peace Process did establish the Middle East Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) regional forum over the period 1992-1995 but the initiative was short-lived, and failed to include Iran.
- *The relative weakness of the UN and the NPT system* - the lack of adequate engagement by the international community on the issue and the domination of the UN Security Council by the permanent five nuclear weapon states (each with veto powers) have limited international pressure and encouragement to negotiate a Middle

East WMDFZ (some pointed to the failure of the United States to exert its considerable influence to ensure the commencement of such negotiations).

Other obstacles identified, but with less support from fellow participants within each of the smaller groups, included:

- The wide diversity of norms and values of the governments and constituencies in the region, particularly the high level of religious polarisation;
- The instabilities caused by the 'Arab Spring', although as previously indicated these were also perceived as potentially beneficial if they led to genuine democratisation;
- The inadequate grasp of the issues involved by the populations of most countries in the region, especially with regard to the nature and likely consequences (regional and global) of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Useful Practical Next Steps

Despite the many obstacles and looming difficulties, participants did nevertheless consider both in small groups and in plenary sessions practical steps that might be feasible in the short to medium term.

As a general proposition a distinct sense emerged in the course of the two-day dialogue that a vibrant and engaged civil society would be an important foundational step in promoting a WMDFZ both within and across national borders.

The proposed hosting of a parallel Helsinki civil society conference scheduled for 14-16 December, 2012 was warmly welcomed by many participants, though little was known about its agenda, organisation or likely participation. It was generally felt that this civil society initiative should go ahead regardless of whether or not governments met in Helsinki in December 2012 as intended.

Owing largely to time constraints, the Athens meeting did not consider in any depth the feasibility or desirability of establishing networks of actors either regionally or nationally. The suggestion was made that such coalitions could be comprised exclusively of civil society groups, or alternatively they could bring together a mixture of policy-makers, experts

of various kinds and representatives of civil society organisations, including a range of religious and community groups. By the same token the mutual respect and understanding that existed between academics, serving and retired officials, other specialists and NGO representatives in plenary and smaller group sessions as well as during informal discussions made the notion of a wider and continuing dialogue a possibility worthy of further consideration.

Implicit in the interventions of several participants, particularly but not exclusively from Egypt, was the positive contribution that an informed and engaged public might be able to make. What people had in mind was not only or even primarily peaceful demonstrations, but other forms of advocacy with particular reference to the media (including mainstream, independent and social media) as well as educational institutions. As one Egyptian put it, 'the key stumbling block in my country is a lack of public awareness, but it's also one of the only ways forward'. For others, reflecting not only on the Arab but also on the Israeli and Iranian experience, the 'youth and youth movements' were seen as critical to engendering the sort of shift necessary to gain wider public support.

International organisations, for example the IAEA and CTBTO, might offer useful implementing mechanisms and frameworks, but they were not seen in and of themselves as capable of taking the WMDFZ forward. One or two participants argued that the European Union appeared in late 2012 to have retreated from the discussions of the WMDFZ, notwithstanding the two EU funded seminars. The Union for the Mediterranean was in the view of some a more acceptable and perhaps more effective mechanism that might facilitate EU engagement with Middle Eastern states. Membership by Turkey, Cyprus and Greece, all of which have long-standing interests and relations with many Middle Eastern states, made this a more promising possibility.

A number of participants pointed to different regional working groups such as the ACRS initiative already referred to or the kind of UN-based regional initiatives that played a positive confidence and trust-building role in the construction of other nuclear weapons free zones.

Generally, however, the contribution of extra-regional states or organisations, including the United States, was not viewed favourably by most participants. This sentiment was reinforced in the minds of many by media reports surfacing days before the meeting in Athens suggesting that the US government had decided that the Helsinki Conference should be postponed.

The efforts of the UN Secretary General and the Finnish government were viewed more favourably. However, many participants doubted that

either was capable of exercising the leadership role needed to define the objectives and modalities of the Helsinki Conference. At issue was their capacity to act independently of the United States, and to a less extent Russia and the UK.

Whilst the role of religion in the Middle East did not feature prominently in the discussions - either as a positive or negative factor - interestingly two participants representing very different religious and political backgrounds put forward the idea of a 'Dialogue of Abrahamic Faiths' as one useful step that might emerge from the 'Athens Dialogue'. Both advocates of the idea offered personal and institutional support were such an initiative to proceed.

Instructively, this proposal met with no opposition from any of the participants, which did not mean that most of them regarded it as a high priority. For its part, the Centre for Dialogue welcomed the proposal, having done some ground work already in this area, and undertook to liaise with both parties with a view to exploring practical possibilities in 2013.

Other Short- to Medium-Term Initiatives

A number of short- to medium-term initiatives were proposed on the second day of the 'Athens Dialogue'.

Many participants expressed support for a number of steps that could be taken more or less immediately by all Middle Eastern states, each of which would serve to build confidence and trust between all states in the region.

- *Ratification by all states in the region of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).* The current lack of ratification by three states in the region - Israel, Iran and Egypt - is simultaneously a regional and global obstacle to this treaty coming into force. On the other hand, ratifying the treaty would not adversely affect current security concerns, since none of the countries has so far declared any intention to conduct such tests, and importantly it would send a positive message that all countries were serious about seeking to negotiate a Middle East WMD FZ.
- *A regional agreement on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) consistent with the proposed global treaty in this area.* None of the regional states has opposed such a treaty in the most recent discussions at the Conference on Disarmament (in contrast

to the position of Pakistan). A regional agreement of the kind proposed would serve to freeze the current situation, and at the same time build confidence and buy time for the negotiation of a regional WMDFZ.

- *Accession to and ratification of the Chemical Weapons and Biological Weapons Conventions.* Such a step would be particularly important in the cases of Israel, Egypt and Syria, and could be done on a mutually agreed reciprocal basis.

Beyond these concrete steps, which do not in and of themselves presuppose the convening of the Helsinki Conference, participants pointed to several other steps that could usefully advance WMDFZ negotiations:

- A regionally agreed declaration that the governments of the region are committed to reducing and eliminating all weapons of mass destruction as part of their national and regional security policies;
- A regional agreement by governments not to attack nuclear installations anywhere in the region;
- A regional agreement on preventing weapons of mass destruction from coming into the possession of non-state actors; and
- A regional undertaking not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

The advocacy role of civil society was a recurring theme of the discussions over the three days. There was widespread support for efforts by civil society networks to work towards de-legitimising nuclear weapons within the region and increasing public awareness of the humanitarian and ecological consequences of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in line with recent initiatives by the governments of Norway, Mexico, Switzerland and Austria, as well as by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

In the development of these networks particular mention was made of lawyers, religious leaders, doctors and other health professionals, scientists, academics, parliamentarians, youth groups, and women's organisations.

Given the absence of a region-wide security forum, some participants proposed the re-establishment of an interim regional security working group modelled in part on the ACRS, or the creation of other regional working groups dealing with one or more human security issues, in particular water, environment more broadly, economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and public health. Regional dialogue around any of these common concerns would serve to enhance trust and cooperation and pave the way for dialogue in politically more sensitive security issues.

Within the UN system, one idea proposed was for the establishment of a UN Middle East Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament similar to UN Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and Asia-Pacific. One of the facilitators with special expertise in this area suggested that this could be achieved through UN General Assembly processes, and would provide an important resource for building regional confidence and developing a better understanding of issues and problems associated with nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. It is worth noting that the UN Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific played a crucial role in facilitating negotiations for the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (Semipalatansk) Treaty in 2006.

As one group noted in its discussion:

We agreed on the recommendation to create a UN regional disarmament centre similar to those present in Africa, Latin America and Asia. This could play a big role in fostering confidence and building a network of expertise. We also mentioned the role of the P5+1. The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) can also be a relevant actor, because countries such as Turkey, Israel, Iran and Egypt are members of this group, and so it has the potential to be a building block for the overall process. Also the [International Committee of the] Red Cross has a role to play. The IAEA can play a bigger role in organising regional conferences on technical issues.

In the wake of media reports that the Helsinki Conference was unlikely to go ahead as planned in December 2012 (subsequently confirmed), participants were overwhelmingly of the view that the Conference should be convened as soon as possible. It was noted that at this stage only Israel and the United States appeared reluctant to proceed with the original timeline - based in large part on their respective responses to the 2010 Resolution and on their perceptions of the roadblocks to Helsinki. Several participants argued that for confidence in the NPT non-proliferation regime to be sustained by regional states it was imperative that the

Conference be held prior to the next NPT PrepCom, scheduled for April 2013 (a timeline later reiterated by the UN Secretary-General in his 25 November, 2012 response to the US announcement). A commonly voiced fear was that failure to do so might well see the unravelling of the whole global non-proliferation regime.

The WMDFZ in the Wider Middle East Context

The Middle East has always been prone to internal and/or external rivalries and tensions - a situation that in the minds of most participants was unlikely to change anytime soon. The principal tensions identified as impacting on negotiations for a Middle East WMDFZ were:

- The Israel-Palestinian question (and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict);
- The dynamics between and within Iran, Israel and the West (particularly the United States and the European Union);
- The efforts of the P5+1 group which has set about addressing the Iran nuclear issue;
- The US-led 'war on terror' (including the Iraq & Afghanistan interventions), and
- Sunni-Shi'a tensions (including regional/sub-regional rivalries between Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey & potentially Egypt, as they jockey for regional supremacy) and the spill-over effects of this issue in Iraq, Syria, Bahrain and Lebanon.

While there was general consensus that conflicts in the Middle East have a considerable bearing on the WMDFZ negotiations, there was a division of opinion on whether progress on one front was likely to depend on progress on the other. Three main views emerged.

According to one view, progress on one front would create good will and flow over onto the other. As a confidence building measure, progress in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process would greatly enhance the prospects for a MEWMDFZ. Similarly, the implementation of a WMDFZ could assist with the easing of regional tensions. In this view, the value of the Helsinki Conference - while concerned primarily with non-

proliferation and the WMDFZ - was its potential to instigate a process that could lead to an inclusive regional security regime/system.

A second, and opposing, view was that an agreement on the WMDFZ depended on first resolving specific local/sub-regional conflicts in the Middle East. Coupling the two - as the last 20 years have shown - has merely produced the perpetuation of the status quo with no progress on either front. These two issues were distinct and had to be dealt with along separate tracks. It was therefore necessary to treat the 'Zone' proposal separately from the peace process. Complicating this approach was the question of how exactly the peace process would be handled in the course of negotiating a WMDFZ. On the other hand, successful negotiation of such a zone could provide a security umbrella or at least the goodwill needed to deal with other conflicts. In this sense, there was much to be gained from getting the Helsinki Conference under way at the earliest possible date.

The third view saw both tracks as separate yet mutually reinforcing with success along one track likely to be reflected along the other.

From the discussion on the potential role of an inclusive regional security forum and how this might aid efforts to establish a WMDFZ in the Middle East the following points emerged:

- As far as the Helsinki Conference was concerned, its mandate was to discuss weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. While it could, technically, discuss other related issues (such as regional security), their inclusion would be counter-productive and could jeopardise the exercise altogether.
- External - or parallel - processes to the Helsinki Conference could be developed, thereby helping to connect a regional Free Zone to a regional security regime. Possible variations on this theme included:
 - A civil society conference to parallel the Helsinki Conference, whose brief would be to advocate, raise awareness, sustain momentum, generate new ideas, and generally set the broad agenda of discussion. Such parallel fora or conferences could over time produce an action plan that went beyond the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and incorporated at least some elements of an incipient regional security regime;

- The creation of a Middle East common market which would directly benefit business organisations and in the process transform business activity into a vehicle for peace (as has occurred with a number of regional organisations);
- Formation of civil society networks comprised of business groups, academics, lawyers, religious groupings, scientists and environmentalists, women's and youth organisations, each lending its support to the establishment of a Middle East WMDFZ – such networking would have to be properly resourced and need therefore additional external support. Several participants stressed the importance of mobilising the support of parliamentarians given the high profile of legislatures and their role in the ratification of treaties;
- Sustained outside pressure to be exerted by influential external players, notably the United States and other permanent members of the Security Council, on all regional powers to engage with the WMDFZ negotiating process;
- Establishment of a regional centre for peace and security in the Middle East;
- Organisation of an interfaith dialogue involving principally the three Abrahamic religious faiths (*i.e.* Islam, Judaism, Christianity); and
- Campaigning for ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), as well as adoption of a 'No-first Use' pledge/policy by Middle East countries.

These steps were considered helpful, each in its own way, as confidence-building measures and as catalysts for the de-legitimisation of weapons of mass destruction. In other words, these steps were thought to be important not only politically but also psychologically. A major question that the dialogue did not have the time to address fully was the extent to which these proposed measures depended entirely on multilateral agreements or whether there was scope for some unilateral initiatives.

A full list of recommendations arising from the Athens Dialogue can be found at Annex A on p. 45 of this Report.

POSTSCRIPT ON THE ATHENS DIALOGUE

REFLECTIONS ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

THE US ANNOUNCEMENT: REACTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

THE most important development immediately following the Athens Dialogue was the US Department of State announcement on 23 November 2012 that the Helsinki Conference would not be convened as previously envisaged in December 2012. This was not entirely unexpected since Athens Dialogue participants had already been alerted through news reports and diplomatic sources that this was likely to happen, and had taken on board this possibility in their discussions and recommendations, particularly the recommendation that if the Helsinki Conference were not to be held immediately, then it should certainly be held as soon as possible.

The decision not to proceed with the Helsinki Conference in December 2012 has, in turn, provoked a number of reactions and responses from key players, including the United States' co-convenors for the Helsinki Process (the UN, Russia, and UK), the Middle East states themselves, the European Union, and the international community more widely. A number of initiatives have taken place at the civil society level, including an NGO Conference in Helsinki on the Middle East WMDFZ proposal, and the facilitating team for the Athens Dialogue has conducted further field work, sounding out views and perspectives in a number of countries (Egypt, Israel, the UK (London), Austria (Vienna), Finland (Helsinki) and Switzerland (Geneva)), and analysing media and other responses since both within the Middle East region and beyond.

The US announcement of 23 November cited as the principal reasons for not proceeding with the conference as previously envisaged the situation in the Middle East and 'the fact that states in the region have not reached

agreement on acceptable conditions for a conference.¹ Since all states in the region with the exception of Israel had already publicly agreed to attend the conference before 23 November (Iran admittedly not until 6 November), it can reasonably be assumed that Israel was the state that had withheld its agreement on the conditions for the conference. It may also be the case that the December timeline was politically awkward for both the US and Israeli governments given their respective national elections, with President Obama under pressure from conservative Republicans concerned to portray him as insufficiently supportive of Israel, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Netanyahu, seeking to focus domestic audience's attention on the claimed threat from Iran rather on potential peace initiatives that might include Iran.

It is reported that President Obama had assured Prime Minister Netanyahu in a meeting in late 2012 that he would not proceed with the Helsinki Conference if all parties were not in agreement that the necessary conditions for holding such a conference had been met. In keeping with these assurances, the State Department explained that the United States would 'encourage states in the region to take a fresh look at the obstacles standing in the way of convening a conference and to begin to explore terms for a successful meeting.' It went on to suggest: 'This will require that all parties agree on the purpose and scope of a conference and on an agenda and process that takes into account the legitimate security interests of all states in the region' and 'operate[s] solely on the basis of consensus among regional parties.'

The US move not to hold the conference in 2012 was severely criticised by regional states (apart from Israel), the wider international community, and the disarmament and peace constituencies. It is instructive to note, however, that the Obama Administration was careful not to close the door on the MEWMDZFZ initiative, pledging that it 'will continue to work with our partners to support an outcome in which states in the region approach this issue on the basis of mutual respect and understanding', and that 'the US fully supports the goal of a Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction and we stand by our commitments.' The question therefore is whether in the coming months key governments, the UN and civil society groups will be able to maintain the momentum for convening the Helsinki Conference in the near term.

¹ Victoria Nuland, Department Spokesperson, *2012 Conference on a Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Press Statement, PRN:2012/1840, US State Department, Washington, DC, November 23, 2012.

Certainly, the responses of relevant governments, the UN, non-proliferation experts, and civil society groups were generally emphatic in calling for the Helsinki Conference to be held without delay, and if at all possible before the next April 2013 NPT PrepCom Conference.

The NPT-designated fellow-convenors for the Helsinki Conference (Russia, the UK and the UN), while acquiescing with US pressure not to hold the conference in December, all issued statements calling for the Conference to be held at the earliest possible date in 2013. The UK, a close US ally, reaffirmed its support for a MEWMDFZ, called for the convening of the conference 'as soon as possible', and endorsed Finnish efforts to reach a negotiated agreement on arrangements 'for a conference in 2013'². Russia, for its part, insisted that the conference should be held no later than April 2013³. The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, called for the conference to take place in 'early 2013'⁴. The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, for their part, reaffirmed their readiness to convene the conference and to continue their efforts 'to prepare the ground', while the Finnish facilitator, Ambassador Jaako Laajava, proposed to hold further multilateral consultations 'as soon as possible'⁵.

While the Israeli Government remained virtually silent on the subject of the postponement, other Middle East responses were generally critical, insisting that the conference should proceed in line with commitments that underpin the whole NPT regime. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry rejected 'the announced excuses' for postponing the Helsinki Conference, describing them as a 'breach of the decision' at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and likely to have 'negative consequences on the review process'⁶. The Arab League Secretary-General, Nabil Elaraby, voiced

² United Kingdom Foreign Office, *Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone Conference*, Press Statement, London, 24 November 2012.

³ Kelsey Davenport and Daniel Horner, Meeting on Middle East WMD Postponed, *Arms Control Association*, December 2012, <http://www.armscontrol.org>, accessed 19/1/13. In explaining the Russian position, a Russian diplomat noted that while Russia had sought to fulfill the mandate to hold the conference in 2012, it also believed that the conference may be postponed upon request from regional countries.

⁴ Patrick Goodenough, U.N., Russia Want Canceled Mideast WMD Conference to Be Held Within Months, Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, November 26 2012, <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/>, accessed 19/1/13.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Press Release on Postponement of Helsinki Middle East Conference, November 2012*, Helsinki, 24/11/12.

⁶ Kelsey Davenport, *op. cit.*

similar concerns, arguing that the whole League rejected 'any attempts to postpone the conference' and emphasizing that Israel was the only regional state that had not expressed willingness to participate in the conference. Iran's nuclear envoy in Vienna, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, stated: 'It is a serious setback to the NPT and this is a clear sign that the U.S. is not committed to the obligation of a world free of nuclear weapons'⁷.

Beyond the region, the European Union also made its position clear. Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, expressed regret at the postponement and the hope that it will be 'convened as soon as possible', and pledged that the EU would remain actively engaged in supporting the Helsinki Process⁸. More recently, the European Parliament has passed a resolution calling on the UN, Finland, Russia, the UK, US, EU and EU Member States to work to ensure that the Middle East WMD-free zone conference take place at the earliest possible date in 2013⁹. The EU Parliament Resolution highlighted 'the importance of the ongoing dialogue on a Middle Eastern WMD-free zone with a view to exploring the broad framework and the interim steps that would strengthen regional peace and security', and called on Middle Eastern states 'to address the need to issue a call for a meeting to explore the terms for a successful conference'¹⁰.

At the civil society level, the international NGO Helsinki Conference, 'The Middle East Without Weapons of Mass Destruction: Civil Society Input - The Way Forward', organised by the Finnish Peace Union, went ahead on 14-16 December 2012 despite the postponement of the Helsinki Conference. In the words of one observer, after an initial 'display of deep frustration', the conference ended with a consensus resolution calling on all parties and the UN to take action at both governmental and civil society levels to successfully convene the conference, and adopted a civil society action plan framework to pursue this¹¹. The NGO conference was attended by one of the Athens Dialogue facilitators, Nicholas Taylor, who

⁷ Fredrik Dahl, Arabs criticize delay of Middle East nuclear talks, Reuters, 26/11/12, <http://reuters.com>, accessed 19/1/13.

⁸ Catherine Ashton, Press Statement, European Union, Brussels, 24/11/12.

⁹ Rachel Oswald, EU Urges 2013 Conference on Mideast WMD-Free Zone, *Global Security Newswire*, NTI, Jan 18 2013, <http://www.nti.rsvp1.com/gsn/article/eu>, accessed 19/1/13.

¹⁰ European Parliament, Resolution 2012/2890(RSP), 9/1/13, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>, accessed 19/1/13.

¹¹ Xanthe Hall, WMD-free Middle East: Pushing the States to the Negotiating Table, Tlaxcala, 2/1/13, <http://www.tlaxcala-int.org/>, accessed 19/1/13.

emphasized the role of civil society in getting states to the negotiation table. The Finnish Foreign Minister, Erkki Tuomioja, in ending the NGO conference, communicated the assessment of the Finnish facilitator, Jaakko Laajava, that the WMDFZ idea emanated from the region, and that it must be the regional states that act as the decision-makers. He went on to clarify that Finland's role is to act on behalf of the convenors (US, Russia, UK, UN), and to proceed 'on the assumption that there has been a readjustment of the timetable.'

The Athens Dialogue project involved a further field trip by Nicholas A.J. Taylor, to examine the positions of key Middle Eastern countries and the wider international community. This was undertaken in November-December 2012 immediately after the Athens Dialogue. The field trip involved more than fifty meetings with current and former policy-makers, academics, scientists, religious scholars, as well as representatives of youth organisations and a range of other national and international non-governmental groups.

Common among Egyptian interlocutors was a firm commitment to the notion of a Middle East WMDFZ, particularly when viewed through a purely 'national security lens'. In the eyes of many Egyptians interviewed the key issue was not so much Israel's nuclear capability or the alleged Iranian programme, but the failure of the parties to reach a common position on the 'urgency and timing' of the Helsinki Conference. Whilst President Morsi has come out in support of the WMDFZ in the UN General Assembly and in a recent meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, there appears to be little or no public debate at this time. The Muslim Brotherhood's policy platform is supportive of the Helsinki Process and the zone concept, but does not see it as a priority in Egypt's current political context. The Muslim Brotherhood envisages a 'coalition' of states both inside and outside the region. Morsi himself previously proposed a coalition of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey to broker a deal with Iran as part of the initiative, but has yet to actively pursue this idea, perhaps because of more urgent domestic priorities and a muted response from both the United States and the UK.

Several indicators pointed to the volatility of Egypt's current political climate. A number of youth movement leaders based in Cairo went so far as to argue that in the event that Morsi does not take a more proactive position in pursuit of regional talks on a WMDFZ, and that he fails to preserve Egypt's 'prestige', Egypt may have no option but to acquire its own nuclear weapon. Other voices made the point that the Brotherhood still has an 'immature' or 'underdeveloped foreign policy', given the absence of an effective political opposition during the Mubarak era.

There have also been some recent published responses from influential Egyptian specialists and diplomats on the Helsinki Conference postponement. Ambassador Mohamed Shaker from the Egyptian Council of Foreign Affairs, who attended the NGO Helsinki Conference in December, strongly criticised the postponement, arguing that the reasons given for the postponement - reaching agreement on the conditions for the conference - were the very reasons why the conference should have gone ahead. In his view holding such a conference would itself provide an opportunity for participating governments to agree, *inter alia*, on what machinery is needed to establish a WMDFZ. Simply by sitting down together around the negotiating table regional governments would generate greater confidence and make people in the region feel less threatened¹².

Ambassador Dr Mahmoud Karem, also from the Egyptian Council of Foreign Affairs, has argued that the United States has to explain the decision to postpone the Helsinki Conference, for in his view the widespread feeling amongst Arab colleagues who participated in the 1995 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences is that the decision has 'sold out' the agreements reached at those conferences and cannot but have 'ripple effects in the Arab world'. The indefinite extension of the NPT, he argues, had been agreed on the understanding that the NPT depositories, particularly the United States, would deliver on their commitments¹³. Dr Karem pointed to the failure of the United States to conduct 'prior consultation' with Arab regional partners before announcing the Helsinki Conference postponement. In his view this might well result in retaliatory action by Arab states, citing as examples a possible boycott of the April 2013 NPT PrepCom meeting, and conceivably withdrawal from the NPT itself on the grounds that failure to make progress on the MEWMDZFZ treaty has 'jeopardized the supreme interests of their countries'. Dr Karem concluded that the United States needed to move quickly to repair the damage, and announce a new date for the convening of the Helsinki Conference as soon as possible, as well as sending special envoys to meet with Arab countries on the issue.

During the field trip to Israel, it was generally difficult to engage in extended conversations about the MEWMDZFZ issue, except with a small number of government officials and academics. This was in part due to sensitivities in discussing national security questions, and to what

¹² Xanthe Hall, *op. cit.*

¹³ Mahmoud Karem, The US must explain its postponement of a crucial NPT conference, *Open Democracy*, 5/1/13, <http://opendemocracy.net/>, accessed 19/1/13.

appeared to be limited understanding of or information on nuclear and WMD issues. The relative absence of public discourse in Israel on the matter of nuclear disarmament has been widely noted for a number of years, and is in part related to the Israeli government's longstanding policy of ambiguity regarding possession of nuclear weapons.

There have, however, been some direct outcomes from the Athens Dialogue in Israeli English-language forums. Writing in the *Times of Israel*, Hillel Schenker, an Athens Dialogue Israeli participant, noted that the Athens Dialogue 'represented the long-term approach, the quest for a new security regime in the Middle East, which will contain a verifiable nuclear and mass destruction weapons free zone' and that, to be viable, this needed to be accompanied by 'comprehensive Israeli-Arab peace'. Schenker contrasted this with the short-term thinking of the Netanyahu Government, which appears to be focused on short-term gains rather than long-term resolution of the conflict. In conclusion, Schenker talked about one of his own experiences in attending the Athens Dialogue:

The day before the conference began four of us - a Palestinian, Egyptian, Turkish MP and an Israeli - went to see the Temple of Poseidon, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. One of the young female organisers said that it's a wonderful romantic sight at sundown that you have to see. She was right. And on the final day, before our trip back to Tel Aviv, we went to see the Acropolis, one of the wonders of the ancient world overlooking the city of Athens, which was dedicated to and named after the Goddess Athena.

According to legend, when the city was founded there was a competition between the Greek Gods Poseidon and Athena over who would be the patron God of the city. Poseidon, the God of the Sea, stood for glory, pride and military prowess, while Athena stood for civilization, wisdom and culture. The citizens of the city, the first democracy in the world, chose the Goddess Athena, thus the city is named Athens and not Poseidon.

We here in Israel have to decide - do we want to follow the route of Athena or Poseidon? Will Jerusalem continue to rely on the might of the IDF, a necessary counterpoint to the helplessness that Jews felt during the Holocaust, or will it also have the Athenian wisdom and foresight to actively seek a long-term resolution of the conflict?¹⁴

But there is no denying that by and large public sentiment in Israel is not to question the position of the government. The nuclear deterrent is widely seen as a necessary guarantee of last resort given that Israel is surrounded

¹⁴ Hillel Schenker, Athens and Jerusalem, *The Times of Israel*, 23 November 2012, <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/athens-and-jerusalem>, accessed 19/1/13.

by neighbours who are not prepared by their words and actions to commit themselves unambiguously to Israel's short- and long-term security. Perhaps the most instructive assessment of the current state of mind in Israel was given by an Israeli commentator who met with Nicholas A.J. Taylor. In his view discussions about a Middle East zone free of nuclear and other WMD in the current state of affairs was a non-starter as the timing for such a probe was wrong:

The region has not stabilised after the political upheavals of two years ago. Arab governments are generally insecure. Egypt is probably in the final stage of adopting a new Islamist identity; Syria may be on the verge of disintegration; Iraq has not regained its independence, the Arab kingdoms are wary of Iranian hegemony; American-led international sanctions have not halted the clandestine Iranian program for a nuclear capability; and, after its elections next month when Netanyahu and his far right coalition government seem almost certain to be reelected, Israel will raise the Iranian issue again.

In the light of these varied and competing pressures what might be the way ahead?

PROSPECTS AND WAYS FORWARD

While the postponement of the Helsinki Conference suggests the way ahead will be strewn with obstacles, it would be premature to conclude that the door has been irrevocably shut on the possibility of Finland hosting such a conference in the foreseeable future.

It is at least conceivable that with elections out of the way in both Israel and the United States, and the new Constitution adopted in Egypt, some of the uncertainties will have been removed and key players may be able to give the issue the more concentrated attention it needs.

It is reasonable to assume that in the coming months international efforts to convene the Helsinki Conference will resume something of the earlier momentum, especially with the April 2013 PrepCom meeting helping to concentrate the mind.

The Athens Dialogue made it clear that overcoming mistrust and lack of confidence would be critical to any serious consideration of the WMDFZ proposal. It also made it clear that there is no simple or single solution to building trust and confidence. Some steps could be taken unilaterally, others bilaterally, and others still multilaterally. Some initiatives could be taken by governments, others by multilateral organisations, and others still by civil society (whether nationally or internationally). Certainly a great

deal more public discussion is needed right across the region about current trends and future possibilities, in particular:

- the likelihood that nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction might proliferate in the region in the coming years;
- what the implications of such proliferation might be;
- the possibility that some may be tempted to use force to prevent one or other state acquiring such a capability, and what the costs of such a course of action might be.

To examine the probability of these and related scenarios and their likely consequences and at the same time to consider what more constructive options may be available will require a great deal of dialogue. This observation is very much in line with the findings and recommendations of the Athens Dialogue, which in fact grew out of the sense that efforts to establish a MEWMD free zone would benefit from greater cross-border understanding involving both state and non-state actors.

What is envisaged here is a sustained academic, political and public dialogue. Such dialogue will need to proceed at different speeds in different places and contexts. Sometimes the dialogue will take place within countries, sometimes regionally, and at other times internationally. This conclusion rests on two observations.

First, governments are less likely to give serious consideration to the negotiating process and to the content and modalities of any agreement if they lack the confidence that such an initiative has substantial domestic support. Secondly, there is reason to think that at least in some countries there are substantial differences of opinion on the specific approach to be taken and even on the wisdom of proceeding in this direction. In the medium- to long-term the airing of such differences may be helpful, especially if the dialogue helps to allay fears and open up possibilities for new and constructive thinking about the future of security in the Middle East.

The 'Athens Dialogue' organisers, the Centre for Dialogue and the European Public Law Organization, are aware of the complexities of the issues involved and the sharply diverging interests and attitudes within and between countries. They are nevertheless encouraged by this first attempt at a regional dialogue and believe there may be value in facilitating further

national and regional dialogue initiatives around the proposal to establish a WMDFZ in the Middle East.

ANNEX A - SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A SUMMARY OF ATHENS DIALOGUE RECOMMENDATIONS

During the Dialogue process, several constructive and concrete proposals emerged.

Overwhelmingly, participants were of the view that the Helsinki Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction should be convened as soon as possible, and that encouragement should be given to new, and constructive thinking about the future security of the Middle East.

Recommendations fall under three broad domains, and are summarised below.

Domain 1: Increase and sustain civil society, academic, and political discussion and dialogue on the need for the establishment of a regional WMDFZ.

This could be done by:

- 1.1 Including, in future conferences and meetings, as far as possible, a wide spectrum of civil society stakeholders and members of the policy-making community; such meetings can themselves perform a substantial confidence-building role;
- 1.2 Focusing on developing networks of lawyers, religious leaders, doctors and other health professionals, scientists, academics, parliamentarians, youth groups, and women's organisations;
- 1.3 Capitalising on the rise of the Arab protest movements of the last two years as an opportunity to educate younger generations on the WMDFZ;
- 1.4 Convening a dialogue explicitly between the three Abrahamic faiths, given their shared traditions and beliefs, to develop a common vision for future security;
- 1.5 Mobilising the support of parliamentarians for a WMDFZ;

- 1.6 Conducting further civil society conferences parallel to the Helsinki Conference whose brief would be to advocate, raise awareness, sustain momentum, generate new ideas, and generally set the broad agenda of discussion;
- 1.7 Conducting further research on the positive contribution that an informed and engaged public might be able to make to the idea of a WMDFZ, especially with reference to the media (including mainstream, independent and social media) and to educational institutions.

Domain 2: Increase, through a process of public education on a national as well as regional basis, awareness of the humanitarian and ecological consequences of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

This could be done through the above measures, and also by:

- 2.1 Establishing a UN Regional Centre for Peace and Security in the Middle East, which would provide an important resource for building regional confidence and developing a better understanding of issues and problems associated with nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (also relevant to Domain 3);
- 2.2 Urging other organisations, such as the IAEA, to play a role in organising regional conferences on technical issues.

Domain 3: Increase trust and confidence-building measures within the region through concrete security initiatives.

This could be enhanced by regional (and external) states undertaking the following measures:

- 3.1 Giving renewed and urgent attention to addressing the Palestinian-Israeli and broader Arab-Israeli conflicts, as these were seen as major obstacles to the WMDFZ negotiating process;
- 3.2 Possibly reviving the so-called Arab Peace Initiative, originally put forward in Beirut in 2002 and reaffirmed in 2007;
- 3.3 Establishing a regional security group, modelled in part on the ACRS, and creating other regional working groups dealing with human security issues, in particular water, the environment, economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and public health. Regional dialogue around any of these common concerns would serve to enhance trust and cooperation and pave the way for dialogue in politically more sensitive security issues;

- 3.4 Harnessing the existing Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) as a relevant actor, as countries such as Turkey, Israel, Iran and Egypt are members of this group. It has the potential to be a building block for broader processes;
- 3.5 Working with various EU agencies, especially the Union for the Mediterranean, to facilitate greater EU engagement with Middle Eastern states;
- 3.6 Producing a regionally agreed declaration that the governments of the region are committed to reducing and eliminating all weapons of mass destruction as part of their national and regional security policies;
- 3.7 Concluding a regional agreement by governments not to attack nuclear installations anywhere in the region;
- 3.8 Reaching a regional agreement on preventing weapons of mass destruction from coming into the possession of non-state actors;
- 3.9 Securing a regional undertaking by regional governments not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction;
- 3.10 Ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT);
- 3.11 Producing a regional agreement on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) consistent with the proposed global treaty in this area;
- 3.12 Acceding to and ratifying the Chemical Weapons and Biological Weapons Conventions;
- 3.13 Giving attention to the creation of a Middle East common market which would directly benefit business organisations and in the process transform business activity into a vehicle for peace;
- 3.14 Encouraging influential external players, notably the United States, other permanent members of the Security Council, the EU and middle powers to exert pressure, on all regional states to engage with the WMDFZ negotiating process.

ANNEX B - 'ATHENS DIALOGUE' PROGRAMME



ATHENS DIALOGUE

On the Proposal to Establish

A Middle East Zone
Free of Biological, Nuclear and Chemical Weapons
as well as Their Means of Delivery (WMDFZ)

Legraina/Sounio, 14-16 November, 2012

PROGRAMME

Sponsored by:

*La Trobe University's Centre for Dialogue, Australia,
and the European Public Law Organization (EPLO), Greece*

In association with:

*International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)
and the University of Queensland, Australia*

Wednesday, 14 November 2012

20.00 Welcome Gala Dinner
Eden Beach Hotel, Anavyssos

Thursday, 15 November 2012

09.00 Pick up from the hotel and transfer to the EPLO premises

09.30 Registration

09.45 Welcome Addresses
Moderator: Michális S. Michael, Centre for Dialogue
Spyridon Flogaitis, European Public Law Organization (EPLO)
Joseph A. Camilleri, Centre for Dialogue

10.00 Introductory Session
Moderator: Michális S. Michael, Centre for Dialogue
Questions:

- Why have I agreed to participate in this dialogue?
- What, if any, are my expectations?

11.00 Introducing the concept of dialogue and guidelines for the conduct of the Athens Dialogue
Presentation: Joseph A. Camilleri, Centre for Dialogue

11.40 Morning coffee

12.00 Dialogue in Plenary: Imagining a future Middle East - 5, 10 or 20 years from now
Moderator: Joseph A. Camilleri, Centre for Dialogue
Questions:

- How might conflict and conflict resolution unfold in the period ahead?
- How are these two possibilities likely to be affected by the actual and potential presence of weapons of mass destruction in the region?
- Or is the present situation likely to remain unchanged?

13.30 Lunch

14.50 Plenary Discussion: The WMD Free Zone proposal - where have we come from and where are we now?
Moderator: Joseph A. Camilleri, Centre for Dialogue

Question:

- What are the most important ways the Middle East situation has changed (*i.e.* psychologically, politically, culturally, and strategically as well domestically, regionally, and internationally) over the last ten or so years?

16.05

Afternoon Coffee

16.20

Dialogue in Smaller Groups: The key obstacles and points of radical disagreement in negotiating the Middle East WMDFZ

Facilitators:

- Michális S. Michael, Centre for Dialogue (A)
- Michael Hamel-Green, Victoria University (B)
- Nicholas A.J. Taylor, Centre for Dialogue and the University of Queensland (C)

Questions:

- Are the key obstacles linked to existing conflicts in the Middle East? If so, which ones? And how?
- Are any of the key obstacles linked to the internal political situation of individual countries?
- Do competing great power interests (either individually or collectively) pose a major obstacle?
- Are there any other obstacles?

Note: Each group is asked to come up with a list of no less than two (2) and no more than five (5) key obstacles.

17.35

Break

17.45

Plenary Dialogue: Weighing up obstacles to and opportunities for establishing such a zone

Moderator: Joseph A. Camilleri, Centre for Dialogue

Questions:

Thinking back to the last session -

- Is there agreement on what the key factors are?
- If there is disagreement, can we identify clearly the nature and importance of the disagreement?
- Do we see any opportunities for progress over the next 12 to 18 months?

18.45

Close of first Day of Athens Dialogue

20.00

Dinner

Eden Beach Hotel Anavyssos

Friday, 16 November 2012

- 09.00 Pick up from the hotel and transfer to the EPLO premises
- 09.30 Dialogue in Plenary: The WMDFZ in the wider Middle East context
Moderator: Michális S. Michael, Centre for Dialogue
Questions:
- Does agreement on a WMDFZ depend on easing of tensions in the Middle East? If so, which are the principal conflicts or tensions that need to be considered?
 - Can progress on both fronts be pursued simultaneously? Or, is progress on one front a necessary condition for progress on the other?
 - Is there a role for an inclusive regional security forum? If so, how might it come about, and how might it assist efforts to establish a WMD free zone in the Middle East?
- 11.00 Morning coffee
- 11.15 Plenary Discussion: Proposals for moving forward - immediate to near term initiatives, activities and legal/technical aspects
Questions:
- What practical steps or initiatives might be taken by state and non-state actors to advance the negotiation process?
 - What might the Middle East WMDFZ look like?
- 12.45 Lunch
- 14.15 Dialogue in Smaller Groups: actors and ethical considerations
Facilitators:
- Michális S. Michael, Centre for Dialogue (A)
 - Michael Hamel-Green, Victoria University (B)
 - Nicholas A.J. Taylor, Centre for Dialogue and the University of Queensland (C)
- Questions:*
- How do we see the respective roles of governments, civil society organisations, and the academic or

expert community in advancing the prospects of a Middle East WMDFZ?

- What constructive role, if any, can international organisations (regional, plurilateral and global) play in this process?
- What ethical considerations should govern the responses of these actors? Do the major religious traditions represented in the Middle East have a role to play in this regard? What of non-religious or secular perspectives?

15.45

Afternoon coffee

16.00

Dialogue in Plenary: key ideas, proposals and recommendations to have emerged from the dialogue

Moderator: Joseph A. Camilleri, Centre for Dialogue

18.00

Formal close of Athens Dialogue

20.00

Dinner

Eden Beach Hotel Anavyssos

ANNEX C - PARTICIPANTS

DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS

Mr. Ahmed Abdelmaksoud Saada

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War
(IPPNW-Egypt)
Egypt

Mr. Ziad AbuZayyad

Palestine-Israel Journal
Palestine

Ms. Baria Ahmar

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND)
Lebanon

H.E. Mr. Ahmed Al-Saati

Head of Bahrain Coalition in the House of Representatives
Bahrain

Prof. Mohammad Abu Asgarkhani

Centre for Graduate International Studies
University of Tehran
Iran

Prof. Aytuğ Atıcı

Member of the Grand National Assembly
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Turkey

Dr David Atwood

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
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Dr. Eitan Barak
Hebrew University
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Mr. Nasser H. Burdestani
International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)
Bahrain

Prof. Paolo Cotta-Ramusino
Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs
Italy

Prof. Thanos Dokos
Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)
Greece

Mrs. Sharon Dolev
Greenpeace
and International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)
Israel

H.E. Mr. Abdel Raouf Elreedy
Honorary Chairman of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs
Egypt

Mr. Denis Fedorov
First Secretary
Embassy of the Russian Federation to Athens
Greece

Prof. Spyridon Flogaitis
National and Capodistrian University of Athens
Director, European Public Law Organization (EPLO)
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Dr. Jasim (Hussain) Ghuloom
Al-Wefaq Political Society
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Mrs. Anissa E. Hassouna
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Maj. Mirza Hatoqay
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Mr. Ammar Hijazi
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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H.E. Prof. Joseph Joseph
Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to Greece
Cyprus

H. E. Dr. Gholamali Khoshroo
Former Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs
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Grand Rabbi Dr Joseph Levi
Rabbi of Florence
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Dr. Karim Makdisi
American University in Beirut
Lebanon

Prof. Ioannis Mazis
National and Capodistrian University of Athens
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Dr. Raafat Misak
Desert Geomorphology Desert Research Center, Cairo /
Kuwait Institute for Research
Egypt / Kuwait

Mr. Mossi Raz
All for Peace
Israel

Dr. Nasser Saghafi Ameri
Center for Strategic Research in Tehran
Iran

Dr. Ahmed A. Saif
Sheba Center for Strategic Studies (SCSS)
Yemen

Mr. Hillel Schenker
Palestine-Israel Journal
Israel

Mr. Hazem Shabat
Palestinian Permanent Mission to the UN in Vienna
Austria

H.E. Ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh
Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
Iran

Mr. Paul Wilson
Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia
to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva
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Mr. Joseph Zelnik
Galilee International Management Institute
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Facilitating Team:

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Mr. Nicholas A.J. Taylor
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School of Political Science and International Studies,
University of Queensland
Australia

ANNEX D - POST-DIALOGUE PRESS RELEASE



Centre **for** Dialogue
— A Centre of La Trobe University —



EPLO
European Public Law
Organization

PRESS RELEASE

26 November 2012

ATHENS DIALOGUE

*On Establishing in the Middle East
A Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Means of Delivery*

Drop all preconditions and start parallel talks simultaneously on freeing the Middle East of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and negotiating an end to the Palestine crisis. This was one of the main conclusions of the November 14-16 Athens Dialogue which took place in Athens/Sounion, Greece and brought together Israeli, Palestinian, Arab, Iranian and other Middle Eastern civil society leaders, former diplomats, and some diplomatic representatives.

The dialogue meeting, attended by some 40 participants, was hosted and facilitated by the La Trobe University Centre for Dialogue (Melbourne) and the Athens-based European Public Law Organization. The two-day dialogue was moderated by the director of the Centre for Dialogue,

Professor Joseph Camilleri, and its deputy director, Dr. Michális S. Michael. Its aim was to support the proposed Helsinki Conference on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, sponsored jointly by the UN, United States, United Kingdom and Russian Federation and likely to take place later this year or early next year.

The gathering of Middle East representatives was marked by extraordinary respect and empathy between participants coming from the areas of conflict. Using the dialogue method developed and refined over many years by the Centre for Dialogue, the meeting generated a range of connections, new opportunities for networking and new ideas on ways forward for Middle Eastern governments and communities.

Proposals emerging out of the Dialogue included new confidence-building measures to promote Middle East denuclearisation, new regional structures to pursue such denuclearisation, and new civil society initiatives to encourage Middle Eastern governments to pursue negotiations. A particular proposal was the establishment of a UN Regional Centre for Peace and Security to match similar centres in other conflict-prone regions of the world.

The Athens Dialogue outcomes and possible next steps will be published and available online from mid-December.

Casting a shadow over the dialogue were the tragic events unfolding in Gaza and Israel. Yet, though emotions were strong, and many were preoccupied by these events, all participants were nonetheless committed to the idea of establishing such a zone, and to the need for practical meaningful steps to be taken over the coming 12 to 18 months. The meeting was overwhelmingly of the view that the anticipated Helsinki Conference should proceed as planned, and if humanly possible in December 2012.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Joseph Anthony CAMILLERI is Professor of International Relations and founding Director of the Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University, Melbourne. Author of over 20 books and more than 100 book chapters and journal articles, he has recently co-edited *Culture, Religion and Conflict in Muslim Southeast Asia: Negotiating Tense Pluralisms*, London: Routledge, 2012 and *Religion and Ethics in a Globalizing World: Conflict, Dialogue and Transformation* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2011). He has co-authored a major study *Worlds in Transition: Evolving Governance Across a Stressed Planet* (Edward Elgar 2009). Professor Camilleri is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences, and chairs the Editorial Committee of the scholarly journal *Global Change, Peace and Security*. He has convened some 20 major international conferences, delivered several keynote addresses on the theme of intercultural dialogue, and has led the development of several international dialogues. He has researched, lectured and given evidence to government and other enquiries on issues of security, disarmament, governance, human rights, and cultural and religious dialogue. He is the recipient of several grants and awards, including the Order of Australia Medal.

Michael HAMEL-GREEN is Professor at the College of Arts, Victoria University Melbourne. His research has focused on regional disarmament and arms control, with a particular focus on nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) and regional security issues. He has published a comprehensive study of the South Pacific Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (Rarotonga Treaty) and more general studies of nuclear free zone approaches for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). Recent publications include: N.A.J. Taylor, Joseph A. Camilleri and Michael Hamel-Green, Dialogue on Middle East biological, nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament: Constraints and opportunities, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 38(1), 2013, 78-98; (with Peter Hayes), Paths to Peace on the Peninsula: The Case for a Japan-Korea Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, *Security Challenges*, 7 (2), 2011, 105-121; Nuclear-Free Zone Arctic: Models and Prospects, *Osteuropa*, 61 (2-3), 2011, 289-299; Les initiatives régionales pour un monde sans armes nucléaires, *Forum du désarmement* (2), 2011, 3-15; Peeling the orange: regional paths to a nuclear-weapon-free world, *Disarmament Forum* (2), 2011, 3-14; Nuclear-

Weapon-Free-Zone initiatives: challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation on non-proliferation, *Global Change, Peace and Security*, 21 (3), 2009, 357-376.

Marianne HANSON is Associate Professor in International Relations and Director of the Rotary Centre for International Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution at the University of Queensland. Her research focuses on global security, international law and international institutions, with a specialisation in arms control and disarmament and she has published widely on these issues. She is currently researching the implementation of rules and norms for averting nuclear weapons' possession and use, linking this to the foreign policies of the world's major states, and their relevance to empirical cases such as in Iraq, North Korea and Iran. Recent publications include: Advocating the elimination of nuclear weapons: The role of key individual and coalition states, *in*: Tanya Ogilvie-White and David Santoro (eds), *Slaying the nuclear dragon: Disarmament dynamics in the twenty-first century* (Athens, GA, United States: The University of Georgia Press, 2012, 56-84); Arms Control, *in*: Richard Devetak, Anthony Burke and Jim George (eds), *An introduction to international relations*, 2nd edn, Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 172-187; The Future of the NPT, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 59(3), September 2005.

Michális S. MICHAEL is Deputy Director of La Trobe University's Centre for Dialogue and has extensive experience in conflict resolution, Australian foreign policy, multiculturalism and dialogical discourse. Since 2005, Dr Michael has led, or co-led, a number of research, educational and training projects pertaining to interfaith and intercultural dialogues at local, regional, national and international levels. Currently he leads a project under the rubric of Capacity Building for Reconciling Divided Communities. This project involves a series of community dialogues amongst conflict diasporas in Australia, as well as training workshops to skill the divided communities themselves as well as third party service providers. Publications include: *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict: Negotiating History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); (co-edited) *Civilizational Dialogue and World Order: The Other Politics of Cultures, Religions and Civilizations in International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); (co-edited) *Asia-Pacific Geopolitics: Hegemony versus Human Security* (Edward Elgar, 2007).

Nicholas A.J. TAYLOR is a research associate at La Trobe University's Centre for Dialogue, and a doctoral researcher in the School of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Queensland. Taylor's primary teaching and research interest is the study of international and global ethics, particularly questions relating to: methods of killing in contemporary warfare; cosmopolitan responses to the weaponisation of the biosphere; armaments manufacturers' limits of responsibility; transboundary environmental harm; and the future of weapons technology. Recent publications include: N.A.J. Taylor, Joseph A. Camilleri and Michael Hamel-Green, Dialogue on Middle East biological, nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament: Constraints and opportunities, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 38(1), 2013, 78-98; N.A.J. Taylor, A rather delicious paradox: Corporate responsibility and the manufacture of armaments, *in*: Ralph Tench, William Sun and Brian Jones (eds.), *Corporate Social Irresponsibility: A Challenging Concept*, West Hampshire, UK: Emerald, 2012; and N.A.J. Taylor, High risk areas, resources and sustainability, *in*: Cary Krosinsky, Nick Robins, Stephen Viederman (eds.), *Evolutions in Sustainable Investing: Strategies, Funds and Thought Leadership*, New York: Wiley Publishers, 2011, 329-44.

ABOUT THE SPONSORING ORGANISATIONS



Centre**for**Dialogue
—A Centre of La Trobe University—

The Centre for Dialogue (La Trobe University) is primarily committed to research but also education and training, policy development and community engagement focusing on the philosophy, method and practice of dialogue, both historically and in the contemporary world.

Formally established by La Trobe University in September 2005, the Centre's research focuses primarily on:

- dialogue between cultures, religions and civilisations - relevant to many contemporary local, national and international conflicts; and
- dialogue between competing globalisation discourses and perspectives.

The Centre has developed an extensive programme in Australia and internationally, involving scholars and experts as well as practitioners in government, industry, labour, international organisations, professional associations and the community sector more generally. It conducts a number of dialogues both within Australia and internationally.

For further information visit: www.latrobe.edu.au/dialogue



The European Public Law Organization (EPLO) is an International Organisation established in 2007 with its headquarters in Athens, Greece. Its mission is the creation and dissemination of knowledge in public law, including, *inter alia*, national, comparative and European public law, human rights law, environmental law, and the promotion of European values throughout the world. To this effect, the EPLO organises and supports scientific, research, educational, training, teaching, institution building and other activities and provides assistance for democratic institutions in Europe and worldwide.

To date 13 countries, 2 International Organisations, 3 public bodies, as well as 62 Universities and Institutions from around the world are members of the Board of Directors of the EPLO. The EPLO has implemented more than 170 projects on the rule of law and democracy, justice reform, institution building, public administration reform, and civil society. The projects have been carried out all over the world: Europe, Mediterranean Countries, Balkan Area, Caucasus and Former Soviet States, Middle East, Central and South Asia, Africa, as well as Latin America and the Small Island Developing States. The work of the EPLO is scientifically supported by its European Scientific Council, the European Group of Public Law, a network of more than 210 judges, jurists, law academics and practitioners, leading figures of their field.

For more information visit: www.eplo.eu