



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/41/465
24 July 1986

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/SPANISH

Forty-first session
Item 51 of the provisional agenda*

ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN THE REGION
OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/41/150.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 12 December 1985, the General Assembly adopted resolution 40/82 entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", the relevant operative paragraphs of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"5. Invites the nuclear-weapon States and all other States to render their assistance in the establishment of the zone and at the same time to refrain from any action that runs counter to both the letter and spirit of the present resolution;

"6. Extends its thanks to the Secretary-General for his report containing the views of parties concerned regarding the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East;

"7. Takes note of the above-mentioned report;

"8. Requests those parties that have not yet communicated their views to the Secretary-General to do so;

"9. Welcomes any further comments from those parties that have already communicated their views to the Secretary-General;

"10. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its forty-first session on the implementation of the present resolution;

"11. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of the forty-first session the item entitled 'Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East'."

2. Pursuant to paragraphs 8 and 9 of the resolution, the Secretary-General, in a note verbale dated 6 February 1986, requested all Member States to submit their views and further comments. The Secretary-General has to date received replies from Botswana, the Dominican Republic, Israel, Italy and Mexico, which are reproduced in section II of the present report.

II. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

BOTSWANA

[Original: English]

[10 March 1986]

Botswana would welcome the designation of the region of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The region has experienced too much turmoil and too many bloody wars, whose repetition is to be discouraged at all costs. In such a politically volatile area so prone to violence, the introduction of nuclear weapons would doom any chance of peace in the area in addition to posing a very dangerous threat to the peace and security of the world as a whole. We therefore support fully the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the area.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

[Original: Spanish]

[17 April 1986]

The Government of the Dominican Republic, in keeping with the pacifist principles underlying its foreign policy, considers that the proliferation, production and storage of nuclear weapons in the world represents a real threat to mankind, and it has therefore always declared that it favours the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, such a zone being of great importance for the troubled region of the Middle East in view of the conflicts in that region. We consider that a build-up of military equipment of any kind is dangerous for regional and world peace. Accordingly, the Dominican Republic supports the establishment in the area of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, with the approval of all the countries of the region, which must make a commitment to the international community, represented by the United Nations; the zone should be monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

ISRAEL

[Original: English]

[6 May 1986]

1. As is well known, Israel supports the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East on the basis of arrangements directly and freely arrived at between the States of the region. This position is a matter of United Nations record and was restated in our letter dated 13 June 1985 (A/40/383).

2. A dimension of this subject which merits closer attention relates to the context in which the nuclear-weapon-free zone may be established and its wider implications for regional peace and security.

3. The Middle East, as a region, is plagued with mistrust and suspicion. The numerous conflicts within and between States have resulted in hostilities and wars. The lack of stable and open channels for normal State intercourse and for dialogue between all the States in the region serves to exacerbate existing tensions and conflicts. It is precisely because of these conflicts and tensions that the creation of an effective and credible nuclear-weapon-free zone would inspire trust and actively promote confidence between all States concerned.

4. Israel believes that direct negotiations to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in our area, based on the precedents of Latin America and the South Pacific and especially on the recommendation of the Palme Commission (United Nations document A/CN.10/38 of 8 April 1983), would be a major confidence-building measure. While there are, as mentioned, political and other differences between the States concerned, this should not be seen as an obstacle to the convening of such negotiations but rather their primary justification.

5. Should the States in the region be willing to participate in such an initiative, the implications for a wider regional dialogue would be considerable. This would constitute a significant step in reducing tensions and reconciling differences in this turbulent region. It thus becomes apparent that a mutually binding nuclear-weapon-free zone designed to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons could be of crucial importance in creating an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence and precluding conventional wars.

6. In addition, the arrangements could promote economic, scientific and technological development of all peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

7. Alternative approaches regarding the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, such as a series of unilateral declarations purporting to bring a nuclear-weapon-free zone into existence in the region, would not appear to have any practical or legally binding effect. Above all, this approach cannot engage any of the complex issues, factors and aspects that would require clarification and negotiation in order to establish the appropriate framework for an effective and credible nuclear-weapon-free zone. Nor would this approach in any way harness the considerable potential that a nuclear-weapon-free zone could have for the development of the region.

8. These, then, are the essential advantages of a negotiated nuclear-weapon-free zone to which Israel attaches great significance.

9. Israel once again takes this opportunity to reiterate its willingness to participate in direct negotiations for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone without pre-conditions before more valuable time is lost.

ITALY

[Original: English]

[9 June 1986]

1. Italy is deeply committed to the goal of preventing war, in particular a nuclear war or any kind of conflict which could escalate to a nuclear level. Since the various areas of the world present different distinctive features, politically and militarily, each region requires differentiated strategies so as to solve problems concerning security.
2. The Italian Government supports the proposals concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It is convinced that the stability of that area, where nuclear weapons are actually not an element of the existing military equilibrium, could be enhanced through the creation of such a zone. This could also contribute to a strengthening of the régime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and to the disarmament process in general.
3. It is the view of the Italian Government, however, that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East - as elsewhere - will only be possible when all the States of the region voluntarily share that goal and freely negotiate to achieve it.
4. The complexity of the political situation of the Middle East undoubtedly constitutes the principal reason for the lack of unanimity of the States of the region on this question. But the adoption of resolution 40/82 by consensus at the fortieth session of the General Assembly has an encouraging meaning.
5. The Italian Government hopes that a measure of agreement can gradually develop among the States concerned with the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.
6. In any case, the situation in this region requires a notable effort of all the States in order to explore all possible ways to achieve and promote peace in a region where, because of its strategic importance, equilibrium and stability appear absolutely necessary.

MEXICO

[Original: Spanish]

[3 June 1986]

1. Mexico, as an active promoter of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, considers that the establishment of denuclearized areas constitutes an important instrument for the promotion of disarmament, and accordingly supports the measures that may be taken to attain this objective.

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2. The Middle East is today one of the geopolitical areas in which there exists a climate of tension that endangers international peace. It would thus be advisable for the States of the region to conclude an agreement to ban nuclear weapons in the zone.

3. The Government of Mexico considers that one measure that would constitute a significant step, pending the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, would be for all the States of the region to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place their nuclear facilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency system of safeguards with the aim of preventing their use for military purposes.

4. The Government of Mexico considers that it is also necessary for all States to refrain from supplying the Governments of the Middle East with equipment and technology capable of being used for military purposes, and that the countries of the zone must refrain from developing, producing, testing or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons or permitting their stationing in the region.
