



**Second Informal Workshop on Good Practices and Lesson Learned of  
Existing Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones**

**Opening Remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu  
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**

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Virtual Workshop  
23 February 2021

Your Excellency, Ambassador Bahous,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Alotaibi,

Distinguished panelists,

Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this second informal workshop in support of the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The impact of the pandemic unfortunately continues to hinder our ability to gather formally in person. This why our ability to meet intersessionally is so important for sustaining momentum and engagement in connection with the Conference. Your interest in continuing this series of workshops and your participation today underscores the seriousness of this process.

It is my assessment that the first informal workshop facilitated a rich and substantive discussion on the development and implementation of existing nuclear weapon free zones, led by officials, academics and experts with direct experience on these matters.

Some of key takeaways from the discussions at the first session included the following:

- (1) Nuclear-weapon-free zones have been successfully negotiated against a backdrop of regional rivalries, tension and conflict.
- (2) Efforts to establish and consolidate zones can be successful if they are able to bring all regional States on board through the process.
- (3) Relations with nuclear-weapon States and other external actors need to be carefully managed and balanced.
- (4) Approaches to maritime and aviation issues like transit, overflight and visitation vary widely depending on the regional context and need to be carefully examined.
- (5) Approaches to security assurances may need to be modernized and tailored to the region.

(6) Norms established by nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties can contribute to the progressive development of global norms promoting disarmament.

In close cooperation with Ambassador Bahous and her team, we have developed a programme designed to enable deeper engagement on some of the most important topics that were discussed at the first workshop.

The overarching aim in this second informal workshop is to shift from understanding the experience of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and to seek to apply these lessons learned to the current process on the Middle East.

This includes an exploration of the current security dynamics of the region, possible approaches to core obligations, verification and related measures to promote transparency, security, confidence and mutual trust.

To facilitate this shift towards examining issues of particular relevance to the Middle East, we have sought inclusion of a diverse set of high-level panelists and experts from all parts of the region and beyond. I am also especially pleased to note the strong presence of women on the programme.

It is my hope that this workshop serves to support efforts by participating States toward fulfilling the outcome and political declaration adopted in November 2019.

I look forward to the outcome of your dialogue over the next three days.

Thank you very much for your attention.