

THE MIDDLE EAST WMDFZ PROJECT

A PROJECT OF THE UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR
DISARMAMENT RESEARCH

DEAR COLLEAGUE,

I hope this email finds you and your family well. We are very fortunate that the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (ME WMDFZ) project team in Geneva is back at the office part time yet, we are aware other parts of the globe are still struggling. We continue to adjust plans and activities in light of the global pandemic. These include acceleration of research activities and taking advantage of new ways to promote dialogue, through exploring a range of topics related to the Zone in virtual formats.

PUBLICATIONS

ME WMDFZ REVIEW PROCESS DETAILED IN ARMS CONTROL TODAY

Tomisha Bino published an [article](#) in the September issue of Arms Control Today reviewing progress of the first ME WMDFZ conference that took place in November 2019. The article offers insights on the upcoming meeting planned for November 2020, the implications of the process for the postponed NPT Review Conference, and the promotion of a ME WMDFZ treaty.



NEW TRANSLATIONS

The Project team has published [Arabic](#), [Hebrew](#), and [Persian](#) translations of a UNIDIR April report, *Pathways Forward for the ME WMDFZ Process and 2020 NPT Review Conference: Conference Report*, reflecting key findings of a conference convened in Geneva in February 2020 with the support of the Permanent Mission of Japan in Geneva.

REGIONAL SECURITY AND THE FUTURE OF THE JCPOA

Dr. Renata Dwan, UNIDIR Director and Dr. Chen Zak Kane co-authored a paper on [The ways and means by which nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to regional peace, stability and other political objectives](#). Dr. Dwan, presented the paper during the Informal Workshop on Good Practices and Lesson Learned of Existing Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, organized by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs in consultation with the President of the United Nations General Assembly ME WMDfZ conference in July 2020. The event served as an intersessional meeting of the UNGA ME WMDfZ conference.



Dr. Farzan Sabet published a commentary *A Fraught Road Ahead for the JCPOA?* The article analyzes how the coming months are likely to be fraught for the JCPOA, with the US attempt to snapback UN sanctions and other factors increasing the risk that Iran will escalate its nuclear related actions.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The Project Team is working on two interactive online tools to be released shortly: **A ME WMDfZ Documents Depository** and a **Timeline of key milestones on the ME WMDfZ**. The purpose of these two tools is to create a widely accessible knowledge hub and primary resource on the evolution of the ME WMDfZ to date. These tools will be publicly available, for free, via UNIDIR's website. With the assistance of the project's Senior Fellow, Ambassador Wael Al-Assad the team has collected over 150 documents from open sources, interviews and private collections including official resolutions, reports, proposals and working papers. Several of the documents have never been published before. Ambassador Al-Assad is also working on the development of short courses on arms control and nonproliferation for diplomats and other practitioners in the region.

The team continues to conduct interviews, now mainly virtual, and to date has engaged over 70 people from 13 countries. These firsthand perspectives will form the basis of a publication reflecting different narratives of the zone and events related to it. By articulating these narratives, we hope to uncover occasions of possible misunderstandings and facilitate insights and understanding of different perspectives which in turn could assist in bridging gaps in future Zone negotiations.

The team is also working on three new research initiatives. The first, **Lessons learned from past nuclear verification and disarmament cases**, aims to draw on past case studies to highlight key themes and facilitate dialogue with regional states on issues related to the verification of nuclear disarmament for the zone.

The second initiative, **Incentives for engaging with ME WMDfZ: Voices from the region** seeks to identify, collate, and discuss with experts from the region the incentives, disincentives, and/or missing incentives of different states in the region to engage in ME WMDfZ processes. The initiative will identify points of convergence that can be built upon and points of divergence that need to be bridged. Planned activities include a dialogue among the seven regional essay authors, a publication of the essays, and a public event.

The third new research stream, **Lessons from the JCPOA for the ME WMDfZ** examines the lessons of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for the ME WMDfZ and related regional security issues. While recognizing that the two processes are significantly different, the JCPOA's unique negotiation process, provisions, and implementation created an important set of tools that could provide valuable insights and lessons for a ME WMDfZ.



PRESENTATIONS

The project team participated in several virtual panels and briefings. These include:

- A lecture that Chen Zak and Tomisha Bino gave in July on the ME WMDFZ as part of the Building Arms Control Capacities in the MENA Region course, organized by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.
- A briefing to the Council of the European Union's Working Party on Non-Proliferation (CONOP) on the project activities and plans ahead of the NPT RevCon 202.
- A panel discussion at the Odessa Summer School Program about Careers in nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament organized by the Odessa Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch with questions or feedback.

With best wishes for your health and safety,

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