



# Understanding THE Middle East WMD-FREE ZONE CONFERENCE

## About the ME WMDFZ Initiative



The primary goal of the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFZ) Initiative is to create a region free of the three kinds of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), namely, nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and their delivery systems.



The initiative is particularly important in the Middle East due to the region's history of conflicts, including the use and threat of the use of WMD. Establishing an effectively verifiable WMDFZ could reduce the risk of conflicts escalating into WMD use, promote trust among neighboring countries, and support global nonproliferation efforts.

For more information explore [UNIDIR's Timeline](#)

## About the ME WMDFZ Conference

### The mandate and objective of the Conference

The 2018 [General Assembly decision 73/546](#) mandates the Conference to negotiate by consensus, and on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at, a legally binding treaty to establish a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, based on the terms of reference in the NPT [1995 Middle East Resolution](#).



**The members to the Conference are the 22 member states of the League of Arab States (LAS), in addition to Iran and Israel**

The three co-sponsors of the [1995 NPT Resolution](#) (Russia, the UK, and the US) and the two other NPT Nuclear Weapons States (China and France), along with the three intergovernmental organizations (the IAEA, OPCW, and the BWC Implementation Support Unit), are invited as observers.

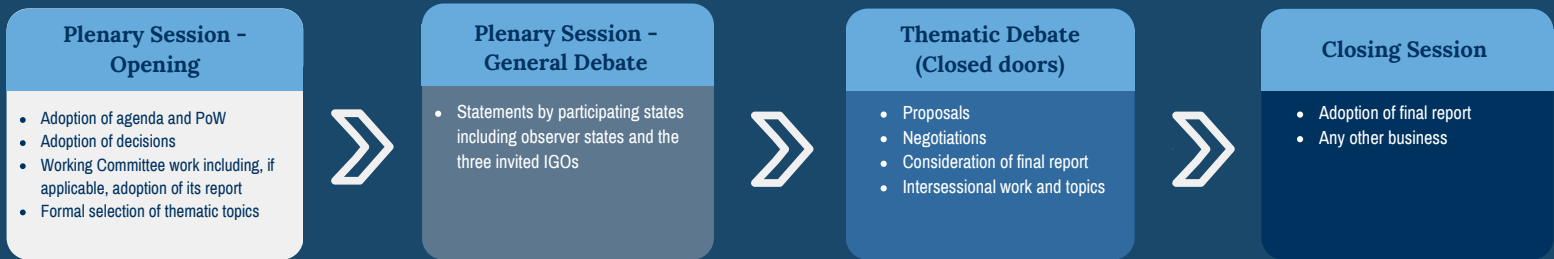
### The first four sessions of the Conference discussed and agreed on multiple procedural and substantive matters

1. The First Session set a process for selecting the [Conference president](#) and adopted a [political declaration](#) reaffirming the inclusivity of the process.
2. The Second Session [established a Working Committee](#) (WC) to continue the substantive work between annual sessions. It also agreed on [rules of procedure](#), which established consensus as the only decision-making method.
3. The Third Session (2022) [discussed](#) a glossary of terminologies prepared by the Presidency and a range of thematic issues identified in paragraph 51 of the Second Session's [report](#).
4. The Fourth Session (2023) adopted a [substantive summary of the WC work](#) for the first time, tasked the WC with developing an index of topics for future sessions, and adopted a [decision](#) on the timing of the Presidency's endorsement to enhance the effectiveness of the Working Committee's deliberations (more details in the table on page 3).

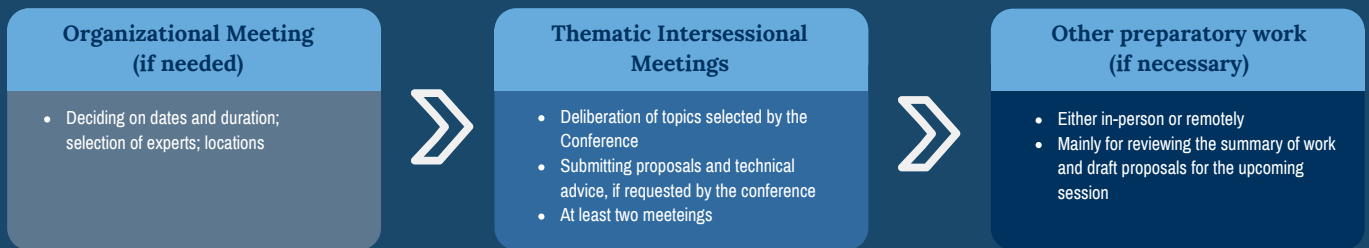
# What is the structure and organization of the Conference's meetings and its thematic work?

The Conference consists of 5-day formal annual sessions and, at minimum, two informal intersessional meetings of the Working Committee

## Annual Session of the Conference



## Intersessional Meetings of the Working Committee



## Several key thematic topics have been discussed in the past sessions

Participating states have exchanged views on several elements of the future treaty and have formulated preliminary positions. There is an initial agreement on the principles and obligations of the future treaty, with WMD treaties (NPT, CWC, and BWC) providing the basis for the treaty. Views on verification (including disarmament, Additional Protocol), entry into force, and unilateral coercive measures have varied. These topics may require further deliberation and technical advice in future sessions.

Other topics, such as the scope and protocols were not discussed at length, as negotiations have not yet reached the right stage and relevant negotiating states are absent.

For more details on the topics and states' statements, see UNIDIR's [Compass](#)

## What to expect from the 5th Session?

Marking five years since the establishment of the Conference, the 5th session is likely to discuss

approaches to systemize the substantive work, including a proposal for an index of topics to guide the discussion of future sessions. The Conference may also discuss the growing nuclear threats in the region, the widening regional war, Israel's non-participation in the Conference, and possible pathways for moving the process forward. A new procedure for endorsing incoming presidencies will be introduced. The 6th Session's presidency, Morocco, will be endorsed on the last day of the Conference to enable their involvement in the intersessional work leading to the 6th Session.

Find the 5th Session's Webpage [here](#)

# Summary of Work and Outcomes of the Conference

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (2019) Session</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> (2021*) Session</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (2022) Session</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> (2023) Session</b>
Presidency	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Libya
Decisions and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procedural basis for presidency, dates, and decision-making.</li> <li><u>Political declaration</u></li> <li><u>Final report</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing a <u>Working Committee</u></li> <li>Adoption of <u>rules of procedure</u></li> <li><u>Final report</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption and annexation of the first WC factual summary</li> <li><u>Final report</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Decision on the timing of endorsement of the presidency</u></li> <li>Proposal for Index of topics</li> <li><u>Final report</u></li> </ul>
Participating states	22 out of 24 regional states (absent: Israel and Somalia); 4 out of 5 observers (absent: US)	18 out of 24 regional states (absent: Djibouti, Comoros, Israel, Oman, Somalia, and Sudan); 4 out of 5 observers (absent: US)	21 out of 24 regional states (absent: Comoros, Israel, and Somalia); 4 out of 5 observers (absent: US)	22 out of 24 regional states (absent: Israel and Somalia); 4 out of 5 observers (absent: US)
Working Committee topics		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the organizational aspects of the working committee</li> <li>(b) legal aspects of a future Middle East zone treaty</li> <li>(c) verification in relation to nuclear weapons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) glossary of terminologies</li> <li>(b) general principles and obligations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) nuclear verification;</li> <li>(b) peaceful uses and technical cooperation</li> <li>(c) an index of topics</li> </ul>
Working papers submitted		3 (Russia, Egypt, Syria)	1 (Kuwait)	

\* The 2020 session was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic

The Fifth session will be held from 18-22 November 2024 under the presidency of Mauritania

## The ME WMDFZ and the NPT

The Conference is considered by its participating members as a complementary track of the NPT 1995 Resolution, which provides the basis for its mandate. The NPT RevCon continues to be a venue for discussing the implementation of the 1995 Resolution, updates from the Conference, and where states of the region seek endorsement and political support for the process. The Conference eases pressure on NPT review cycles by providing another venue for addressing regional WMD risks.

For more information and resources see [The UNIDIR ME WMD-Free Zone Project's publications](#)



Pathways forward for the ME WMDFZ Process and 2020 NPT Review Conference: Conference Report



Perspectives, Drivers, and Objectives for the Middle East WMD-Free Zone: Voices from the Region



Examining Modalities for Nuclear Disarmament in the Middle East WMD-Free Zone Treaty

