



**Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones: Building Blocks for a World Free
of Nuclear Weapons**

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and Signatories of Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and
Mongolia**

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It is my pleasure to be here today. I would like to thank the President of the Conference, Ambassador Rachmat Budiman of Indonesia, for inviting me to address you.

Assembled in this room is an exceptionally diverse grouping of States. However, you all have one issue in common: A commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons.

In the five years since your last conference achieving that goal has, sadly, become more complicated. Although there have been many excellent steps made towards nuclear disarmament since the end of the Cold War, this process appears to have gone adrift.

Where we should see a defined path, building on the achievements of the last twenty years, we have, instead, a return to Cold War mentalities, deteriorating relations between nuclear weapon States, expensive modernisation campaigns that will entrench nuclear weapons in security doctrines for years to come and, alarmingly, veiled threats to use nuclear weapons as a tool of war.

It is, therefore, reassuring to remember that, even during this disappointing period of reversal, nuclear-weapon-free zones remain a silver lining to the disarmament cloud.

Slowly but surely, over the course of decades, nuclear-weapon-free zones have grown to the point that they now cover around 56 percent of the Earth's surface, including virtually all of the Southern hemisphere, and are comprised of 115 States – or 60 percent of the United Nations' membership.

This represents a truly significant achievement.

Nuclear-weapons-free zones have made an invaluable contribution to not only the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, but also to regional and international security.

They provide tangible security benefits for all participants.

Not only do they contain negative security assurances provided by nuclear weapon States, but, as verifiable and enforceable confidence-building measures, they assure member states that their neighbours are not pursuing nuclear weapon capabilities.

The dividends produced by nuclear weapon-free zones for the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes are, to my mind, obvious.

First, they are a practical means for outlawing nuclear weapons within a specified geographic area.

Second, in parts of the world where so many have suffered from the effects of nuclear tests, they are a means to ensure future generations will not endure the same fate.

Third, they are an essential building block for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Fourth, and above all, these agreements represent a broad regional consensus to reject nuclear weapons and the grave dangers they pose to humanity and the environment.

Since 2010, there has also been real progress in strengthening nuclear-weapon-free zones, including the joint signature by the nuclear weapon States of the protocols to the

Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and their joint pledge to respect Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status.

Of course, more needs to be done. Those nuclear weapon States who have not yet done so should ratify the relevant protocols, without condition and without delay.

It is deeply disappointing that the Treaty of Tlateloco remains the only zone whose protocols have been ratified by all five nuclear weapon States. I hope that those States that have not yet ratified will use this forum to articulate how and when they plan to do so.

Those who have imposed conditions on security assurances should withdraw them.

Any regional States who have not joined the treaty regimes should consider doing so as soon as possible.

I also encourage States to explore new ways to consolidate, reinforce, and universalize norms found in each of the treaties.

In this context, the increasing collaboration between member states is a welcome and positive development – it will only serve to strengthen the nuclear-weapon-free zone regime.

I encourage you to continue to work together to promote initiatives aimed at improving national capacities, particularly in the crucial areas of verification and compliance.

I also ask you to consider playing an educational role – to reinforce awareness of the existential threat that nuclear weapons continue to pose to humanity and the need to reduce and eliminate this threat.

Finally, I urge you to work together to facilitate a proliferation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Three potential new zones spring immediately to mind.

One of the most economically dynamic regions in the world, North-East Asia is also home to some of its most intractable disputes. I encourage you to work with states of the region, civil society and international bodies to explore the possibility of removing the threat that nuclear weapons pose to this region.

As the polar ice caps continue to recede the Arctic has become a contested space. I fear that disputes over economic zones and rights to mineral deposits could fuel conflict. A nuclear-weapon-free region in the Arctic, agreed by the six bordering States, would reduce the likelihood of dangerous escalation in this precious and unique area.

The failure to make progress on a long-awaited nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction is an issue with which Monday's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference will need to grapple. I trust the Conference can draw on your valuable experience to enable the States of the region to move forward on this issue with a shared vision and purpose.

The relationship between the NPT and nuclear-weapon-free zones is a complementary one – the two regimes are inherently linked through Article VII of the treaty. It is my sincere

hope that the common ground forged by the States at this conference in coming together to rid your regions of nuclear weapons can be replicated at the Review Conference.

Excellencies, this conference serves as a reminder that, although regional in nature, each of the agreements represented here today is part of the global imperative to abolish nuclear weapons. Every State that joins a nuclear-weapon-free zone brings us one step closer to a world free of these catastrophic weapons.

As the Secretary General has said – let us make the whole world a nuclear-weapon-free zone.