

Athens Dialogue
on
A Middle East zone
free of weapons of mass destruction
and their means of delivery

14-16 November 2012

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

During the Dialogue process, several constructive and concrete proposals emerged.

Overwhelmingly, participants were of the view that the Helsinki Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction should be convened as soon as possible, and that encouragement should be given to new, and constructive thinking about the future security of the Middle East.

Recommendations fall under three broad domains, and are summarised below.

Domain 1: Increase and sustain civil society, academic, and political discussion and dialogue on the need for the establishment of a regional WMDFZ.

This could be done by:

1.1 Including, in future conferences and meetings, as far as possible, a wide spectrum of civil society stakeholders and members of the policy-making community; such meetings can themselves perform a substantial confidence-building role;

1.2 Focusing on developing networks of lawyers, religious leaders, doctors and other health professionals, scientists, academics, parliamentarians, youth groups, and women's organisations;

1.3 Capitalising on the rise of the Arab protest movements of the last two years as an opportunity to educate younger generations on the WMDFZ;

1.4 Convening a dialogue explicitly between the three Abrahamic faiths, given their shared traditions and beliefs, to develop a common vision for future security;

1.5 Mobilising the support of parliamentarians for a WMDFZ;

1.6 Conducting further civil society conferences parallel to the Helsinki Conference whose brief would be to advocate, raise awareness, sustain momentum, generate new ideas, and generally set the broad agenda of discussion;

1.7 Conducting further research on the positive contribution that an informed and engaged public might be able to make to the idea of a WMDFZ, especially with reference to the media (including mainstream, independent and social media) and to educational institutions.

Domain 2: Increase, through a process of public education on a national as well as regional basis, awareness of the humanitarian and ecological consequences of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

This could be done through the above measures, and also by:

2.1 Establishing a UN Regional Centre for Peace and Security in the Middle East, which would provide an important resource for building regional confidence and developing a better understanding of issues and problems associated with nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (also relevant to Domain 3);

2.2 Urging other organisations, such as the IAEA, to play a role in organising regional conferences on technical issues.

Domain 3: Increase trust and confidence-building measures within the region through concrete security initiatives.

This could be enhanced by regional (and external) states undertaking the following measures:

3.1 Giving renewed and urgent attention to addressing the Palestinian-Israeli and broader Arab-Israeli conflicts, as these were seen as major obstacles to the WMDFZ negotiating process;

3.2 Possibly reviving the so-called Arab Peace Initiative originally put forward in Beirut in 2002 and reaffirmed in 2007;

3.3 Establishing a regional security group, modelled in part on the ACRS, and creating other regional working groups dealing with human security issues, in

particular water, the environment, economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and public health. Regional dialogue around any of these common concerns would serve to enhance trust and cooperation and pave the way for dialogue in politically more sensitive security issues;

3.4 Harnessing the existing Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) as a relevant actor, as countries such as Turkey, Israel, Iran and Egypt are members of this group. It has the potential to be a building block for broader processes;

3.5 Working with various EU agencies, especially the Union for the Mediterranean, to facilitate greater EU engagement with Middle Eastern states;

3.6 Producing a regionally agreed declaration that the governments of the region are committed to reducing and eliminating all weapons of mass destruction as part of their national and regional security policies;

3.7 Concluding a regional agreement by governments not to attack nuclear installations anywhere in the region;

3.8 Reaching a regional agreement on preventing weapons of mass destruction from coming into the possession of nonstate actors;

3.9 Securing a regional undertaking by regional governments not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction;

3.10 Ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT);

3.11 Producing a regional agreement on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) consistent with the proposed global treaty in this area;

3.12 Acceding to and ratifying the Chemical Weapons and Biological Weapons Conventions;

3.13 Giving attention to the creation of a Middle East common market which would directly benefit business organisations and in the process transform business activity into a vehicle for peace;

3.14 Encouraging influential external players, notably the United States, other permanent members of the Security Council, the EU and middle powers to exert pressure, on all regional states to engage with the WMDfZ negotiating process.