



CMRCET MUN



# Background Guide

*Agenda: Deliberation on the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East.*

DISEC  
CMRCETMUN 2026

## **Letter from the Executive Board**

Dear Delegates,

We are very pleased to welcome you to the simulation of the **UNGA: DISEC at CMRCET MUN 2026**. It is an honour to serve as your Executive Board for the duration of the conference. This Background Guide is designed to give you an insight into the case at hand, so we hope this acts as only a catalyst for furthering your research and not limited to just this guide. Please refer to it carefully. Remember, a thorough understanding of the problem is the first step to solving it.

***Do understand that this Background Guide is in no way exhaustive and is only meant to provide you with enough background information to establish a platform for beginning the research.*** Delegates are highly recommended to do a good amount of research beyond what is covered in the Guide. The guide cannot be used as proof during the committee proceedings under any circumstances.

We understand that MUN conferences can be an overwhelming experience for first-timers but it must be noted that our aspirations from the delegates are not how experienced or articulate they are. Rather, we want to see how one manages the balance to respect disparities and differences of opinion and work around this while extending their foreign policy to present comprehensive solutions without compromising on their self-interests and initiate consensus building.

New ideas are by their very nature disruptive, but far less disruptive than a world set against the backdrop of stereotypes and regional instability due to which reform is essential in policy making and conflict resolution. At any point during your research, do not hesitate to contact the Executive Board Members for clarifications or in case you need help in any other aspect. We look forward to a fruitful discussion and an enriching experience with all of you.

***Best regards,***

***Eswar Chava  
Chair person***

***Thanwika Shivarathree  
Vice Chairperson***

***Jayden Lawrence  
Rapporteur***

## **Important Points to Remember**

A few aspects that delegates should keep in mind while preparing:

1. **Procedure:** The purpose of putting in procedural rules in any committee is to ensure a more organized and efficient debate. The committee will follow the UNA-USA Rules of Procedure. Although the Executive Board shall be fairly strict with the Rules of Procedure, the discussion of the agenda will be the main priority. So, delegates are advised not to restrict their statements due to hesitation regarding procedure.

2. **Foreign Policy:** Following the foreign policy of one's country is the most important aspect of a Model UN Conference. This is what essentially differentiates a Model UN from other debating formats. To violate one's foreign policy without adequate reason is one of the worst mistakes a delegate can make.

3. **Role of the Executive Board:** The Executive Board is appointed to facilitate debate. The committee shall decide the direction and flow of debate. The delegates are the ones who constitute the committee and hence must be uninhibited while presenting their opinions/stance on any issue. However, the Executive Board may put forward questions and/or ask for clarifications at all points of time to further debate and test participants.

4. **Nature of Source/Evidence:** This Background Guide is meant solely for research purposes and must not be cited as evidence to substantiate statements made during the conference. Evidence or proof for substantiating statements made during formal debate is acceptable from the following sources:

- a. **United Nations:** Documents and findings by the United Nations or any related UN body is held as a credible proof to support a claim or argument.  
**Multilateral Organizations:** Documents from international organizations like OIC, NATO, SAARC, BRICS, EU, ASEAN, the International Court of Justice, etc. may also be presented as credible sources of information.
- b. **Government Reports:** These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country.

- c. **News Sources:**

1. **Reuters:** Any Reuters article that clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in council.
2. **State operated News Agencies:** These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such but in that situation, may be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are – RIA Novosti (Russian Federation), Xinhua News Agency (People's Republic of China), etc.

**\*\*\*Please Note: Reports from NGOs working with UNESCO, UNICEF and other UN bodies will be accepted. Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia, or newspapers like the Guardian, Times of India, etc. be accepted. However, notwithstanding the criteria for acceptance of sources and evidence, delegates are still free to quote/cite from any source as they deem fit as a part of their statements.**

## **Guidelines**

- Read the entirety of the background guide in the order it was written. Make sure to highlight the names of specific treaties, documents, resolutions, conventions, international bodies, events and any other specific incidents so that you can get back to them later and do a lot more thorough research.
- Understand some of the basic details regarding the country that you've been allotted whether this be the capital, current affairs regarding geopolitical situation, political hierarchy etc. While not strictly necessary, you never know when this can turn out to be handy. Geography Now's A - Z Country List has been a particularly helpful resource for this.
- Use a search engine of your choice to create as many tabs as possible for the highlighted terms from your background guide. Wikipedia or a YouTube video act as a great way to get a brief summary of the incidents at hand but such sources (especially Wikipedia articles) cannot be used in committee as sources.
- Delve into deeper research regarding the particular position of your allocation with the agenda at hand. Try searching for the voting stances of your allocation in related conventions and understanding the reasons for voting as so. UN Press Releases are also a helpful source for this matter.
- Find the website for the foreign ministry of the country you have been assigned alongside the "Permanent Mission of COUNTRY to the United Nations" website and search for a key term relating to the agenda, this should often give you statements from recent press conferences or UN committee sessions that can act as valuable sources of information in forming a position.
- Keep a handy copy of the Charter of the United Nations, whether as a .pdf file extension or physical copy works. This contains the founding principles of the United Nations and contains articles that lay out the mandate of the six bodies that the United Nations is primarily divided into. Spend some additional time researching the specific mandate and functions of the committee that you have been assigned.

- The Executive Board may ask for the source of a statement that a delegate makes in committee either during a Point of Order circumstance or if said statement stands to be of interest to the Executive Board. Therefore, it is recommended that delegates keep track of their sources when making / disputing a claim and also ensure their validity. Please do remember that while you as a delegate are allowed to cite any source you wish during committee.

## **Hierarchy of evidence**

Evidence can be presented from a wide variety of sources, but not all sources are treated as equal. Here's the hierarchy in which evidence is categorised:

**Tier 1:** Includes any publication, statement, resolution, or document released by any of the Nations' official organs or committees; any publication, statement, or document released by a UN member state in its own capacity. The evidence falling in this tier is considered most reliable during the simulation.

**Tier 2:** Includes: any news article published by any official media source that is owned and controlled by a UN member state. E.g.: Xinhua News (China), Prasar Bharti (India), BBC (United Kingdom) etcetera. The evidence falling in this tier is considered sufficiently reliable in case no other evidence from any Tier 1 source is available on that particular fact, event, or situation.

**Tier 3:** Includes: any publication from news sources of international repute such as Reuters, The New York Times, Agence-France Presse, etcetera. The evidence falling under this tier is considered the least reliable for the purposes of this simulation. Yet, if no better source is available in a certain scenario, it may be considered.

## **Foreign Policy and Foreign Relations**

Foreign policy, in simple terms, is what your country aims to achieve in regard to the issue at hand or in general with its relations with other countries.

### **1. What role must foreign policy play in your research?**

Understanding the foreign policy of your country must be a checkbox that you tick off at the very beginning of your research.

Your foreign policy should dictate everything from the arguments you make, the reasoning you give for making those arguments, and the actions you take in the Council.

### **2. Where do I look to find foreign policy?**

Most of the time, foreign policy is not explicitly stated. It must be inferred from the actions and statements issued by the country. Reading the meeting records from previous meetings of UNSC (or any other UN body where your country might have spoken on the issue) is a great place to start. If such records are unavailable, look for statements from your country's Foreign Ministry (or equivalent like Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs etcetera) and top leadership (PM, Pres., Secretary of State, Defence Minister).

Foreign Relations on the other hand refers to the diplomatic ties that one country has with another and considers elements such as the mutual presence of embassies, consulates, ambassadors & diplomatic dialogue. More often than not, foreign policy is what will be of your primary concern during the MUN, but it is important to also consider any extremities in your allotted country's foreign relations.



## **Introduction to the committee**

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is one of the six organs of the United Nations (UN) and the primary policy making and representative organ of the United Nations where all of the 193 members of the UN are represented in the General Assembly. The Disarmament and International Security Committee is the first committee under the General Assembly that deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to world peace.

The six committees of the United Nations General Assembly being:

- First Committee - Disarmament & International Security,
- Second Committee - Economic & Financial Council,
- Third Committee - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues,
- Fourth Committee - Special Political & Decolonization Committee,
- Fifth Committee - Administrative & Budgetary, &
- Sixth Committee - Legal.

## **Mandate**

The Disarmament and International Security Committee is mandated to address the nuclear, chemical, biological, conventional, etc. weapon proliferation and to deal with the issues threatening international security and peace.

DISEC makes recommendations to the UNGA regarding the resolutions and establishes principles and international cooperation between states to maintain global security. It considers all disarmament and international security matters within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any other organ of the United Nations; the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments; promotion of cooperative arrangements and measures aimed at strengthening stability through lower levels of armaments.

DISEC works closely with other UN bodies and agencies like the United Nations Office on Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The First Committee sessions are structured into three distinctive stages:

1. General debate,
2. Thematic discussions, &
3. Action on Drafts.

## **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)**

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) are weapons designed to cause large-scale loss of life, severe physical destruction, and long-term harm to human populations, infrastructure, and the natural environment. Unlike conventional weapons, WMDs are characterized by their indiscriminate effects, meaning they cannot be confined to military targets and often disproportionately affect civilian populations. WMDs also have far-reaching psychological, economic, and political consequences, including mass displacement, long-term health crises, environmental contamination, and regional or global instability. Due to these characteristics, the use of WMDs is widely regarded as incompatible with the principles of international humanitarian law, particularly distinction, proportionality, and necessity.

The three primary categories of Weapons of Mass Destruction are nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

### ***Nuclear Weapons***

Nuclear weapons are explosive devices that release enormous amounts of energy through nuclear fission, nuclear fusion, or a combination of both. These reactions produce instantaneous mass destruction, intense heat, blast waves, ionizing radiation, and long-lasting radioactive fallout. The humanitarian and environmental effects of nuclear weapons extend far beyond the moment of detonation. The detonation of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 remains the most prominent example of their catastrophic impact, resulting in massive civilian casualties and long term health consequences such as radiation induced illnesses, radiation sickness, cancer, genetic damage, and long-term psychological trauma, while affected areas can remain uninhabitable for decades. Nuclear weapons are also central to deterrence doctrines, where their possession is justified as a means of preventing conflict through the threat of catastrophic retaliation.

***Examples:*** Atomic (fission) bombs, Hydrogen (thermonuclear) bombs

### ***Chemical Weapons***

Chemical weapons employ toxic chemical substances to cause death, injury, or temporary incapacitation by interfering with vital bodily systems such as the nervous system, respiratory system, blood circulation, or skin. These weapons can be deployed in gaseous, liquid, or aerosol forms, allowing them to spread over wide areas depending on weather and terrain. Chemical weapons are particularly dangerous due to their relatively low cost, ease of production, and rapid effects, making them attractive to both state and non-state actors. Their use often results in severe civilian suffering, long-term health complications, and environmental contamination. The use of sarin in the Syrian conflict and chemical attacks during the Iran Iraq War illustrate the grave humanitarian and legal consequences associated with chemical weapons.

***Examples:*** Nerve agents (Sarin, VX), Choking agents (Chlorine), Riot Control Agents and Blister Agents (Mustard gas)

## ***Biological Weapons***

Biological weapons involve the deliberate release of pathogens or toxins, including bacteria, viruses, or fungi, to cause disease or death in humans, animals, or plants. Unlike other WMDs, biological weapons may take time to manifest, making them difficult to detect and contain. The effects of biological weapons can spread uncontrollably, potentially resulting in epidemics or pandemics, overwhelming healthcare systems, and causing widespread panic. Their dual-use nature, where the same materials may be used for legitimate medical or research purposes, poses significant challenges for verification and enforcement.

**Examples:** Anthrax, Smallpox and Botulinum toxin

## **Common Delivery Systems of WMDs**

Delivery systems determine how WMDs are transported, deployed, and dispersed, significantly amplifying their destructive potential. Effective delivery systems increase range, accuracy, survivability, and deterrence value.

### ***Ballistic Missiles***

Ballistic missiles are the primary delivery systems for nuclear weapons and follow a high-arc trajectory, often traveling beyond Earth's atmosphere before re-entering at extremely high speeds. Due to their intercontinental range, rapid launch capability, and limited interception options, ballistic missiles are central to nuclear deterrence strategies and strategic stability doctrines.

### ***Cruise Missiles***

Cruise missiles are low-flying, precision-guided weapons designed to evade radar detection and air defence systems. They are capable of carrying nuclear or chemical warheads and are valued for their high accuracy and controlled targeting, allowing states to strike strategic military or infrastructure targets with reduced warning time.

### ***Aircraft(Bombers and Fighter Jets)***

Military aircraft function as flexible and adaptable delivery platforms for WMDs. They can deploy gravity bombs, air-launched missiles, or conduct aerial dispersal of chemical or biological agents. Aircraft provide strategic flexibility due to their recall capability and controlled deployment, making them an important component of state-level deterrence and strike capabilities.

### ***Artillery and Rocket Systems***

Artillery and rocket systems are short-range delivery mechanisms, historically associated with the use of chemical weapons in battlefield environments. Although limited in range, their ease

of deployment, mobility, and rapid firing rates pose significant risks to civilian populations, especially in densely populated or urban conflict zones.

### ***Unmanned Aerial Vehicles(UAVs / Drones)***

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles represent an emerging and increasingly concerning delivery system. Their low detection risk, remote operation, and accessibility raise fears of WMD dispersal by Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs). Drones could be used for targeted delivery of chemical or biological agents, complicating traditional arms control and counter-proliferation efforts.

### ***Naval Platforms***

Naval platforms, including submarines and surface vessels, enable the sea-based deployment of missile systems, particularly nuclear-capable missiles. Submarine-launched systems provide a second-strike capability, which is a cornerstone of deterrence theory. While enhancing strategic stability, these platforms also increase the complexity of disarmament, verification, and arms control negotiations.

## ***Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zones (WMDFZs)***

Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zones (WMDFZs) are geographically defined regions in which States voluntarily undertake, through legally binding international agreements, to prohibit the development, acquisition, testing, deployment, stationing and use of weapons of mass destruction, namely nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons. Rooted in the principles of collective security, disarmament and non proliferation, WMDFZs function as preventive arms control mechanisms under international law, aimed at reducing regional insecurity and mitigating the risk of catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

The legal basis of WMDFZs can be traced to Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, which mandates the maintenance of international peace and security and encourages the regulation of armaments. This is reinforced by Article VI of the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which obliges States to pursue negotiations in good faith toward nuclear disarmament. Parallel treaty regimes, including the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, establish comprehensive prohibitions on entire categories of weapons of mass destruction. WMDFZs translate these global legal obligations into region specific, operational commitments.

From a legal standpoint, WMDFZs are created through multilateral treaties negotiated and ratified by States within the designated region. These treaties typically contain binding prohibitions on WMD related activities, verification and compliance mechanisms, and protocols through which nuclear weapon States provide negative security assurances, committing not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States parties to the zone. Verification frameworks rely heavily on International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards,

often supplemented by Additional Protocols, while compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention regimes addresses chemical and biological dimensions.

Despite their legal soundness, WMDFZs face political and legal challenges. Regional security asymmetries, unresolved conflicts, and the reluctance of nuclear weapon States to provide unconditional security assurances can impede their establishment, as illustrated by the prolonged negotiations surrounding a Middle East WMDFZ. Nevertheless, international law recognizes such zones as legitimate confidence building measures that enhance regional stability without infringing on State sovereignty, since participation remains voluntary and based on consent.

### **Distinction between NWFZs and WMDFZs**

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs) are limited exclusively to nuclear weapons, prohibiting their development, testing, acquisition, or deployment within the designated region. They do not address chemical or biological weapons, which are governed separately under other international treaties. In contrast, Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zones (WMDFZs) are broader and more comprehensive, covering all three categories of WMDs: nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

While NWFZs are well established in international law and practice, WMDFZs represent a more ambitious framework, aiming for complete regional disarmament rather than partial prohibition. As of now, there are five internationally recognized Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs) established through legally binding regional treaties, along with one additional treaty covering the Antarctic region.

1. ***Treaty of Tlatelolco:*** Covers Latin America and the Caribbean. It was the first NWFZ treaty and serves as a model for subsequent zones.
2. ***Treaty of Rarotonga:*** Establishes a NWFZ in the South Pacific, covering Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island states.
3. ***Treaty of Bangkok:*** Covers Southeast Asia under ASEAN, prohibiting nuclear weapons across the region.
4. ***Treaty of Pelindaba:*** Applies to the African continent and adjacent islands, reinforcing Africa's commitment to nuclear disarmament.
5. ***Treaty of Semipalatinsk:*** Covers Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.
6. ***Antarctic Treaty:*** While not a regional NWFZ treaty in the traditional sense, it prohibits nuclear explosions and disposal of radioactive waste in Antarctica.

## **Legal Status of WMDFZs**

Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zones do not currently exist as a universally codified legal regime under a single international treaty. Unlike NWFZs, which are established through region specific, legally binding agreements, WMDFZs derive their legal basis primarily from UN General Assembly resolutions, conference mandates and principles of international law. Legally, the establishment of a WMDFZ is permissible under international law, provided it is based on voluntary consent, regional ownership and mutual security assurances.

The concept of a WMDFZ has been repeatedly endorsed by the UN General Assembly, particularly in the context of the Middle East. Since 1974, the General Assembly has adopted annual resolutions calling for the establishment of a Middle East WMDFZ, reaffirming the principle that regional disarmament contributes to international peace and security. These resolutions, while not legally binding, reflect strong *opinio juris* and contribute to the development of international norms. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference further reinforced this idea by recognizing the establishment of a Middle East WMDFZ as an essential component of regional security.

A future WMDFZ treaty would effectively regionalize and consolidate obligations already binding on most states under these instruments. However, the absence of universal membership in these treaties and regional security concerns limit legal codification. Furthermore, UN resolutions related to WMDFZs are recommendatory rather than binding, meaning their implementation depends on political will, rather than enforceable legal obligations. As a result, WMDFZs remain a normative and aspirational framework, supported in principle by the international community but challenged in practice.

## **History of Conflicts in the Middle East**

The Middle East has experienced sustained instability since the mid twentieth century, shaped by unresolved territorial disputes, ideological rivalry, sectarian divisions and repeated external interventions. Unlike other regions that have successfully institutionalized arms control mechanisms, the Middle East remains uniquely characterized by the persistence of both conventional and unconventional security dilemmas. The history of armed conflict in the region has not only normalized the logic of deterrence but has also entrenched reliance on weapons of mass destruction, whether actual, perceived, or suspected. This historical trajectory directly informs contemporary debates surrounding the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East.

### ***Arab Israeli Conflicts and the Emergence of Nuclear Deterrence***

The Arab Israeli wars of 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973 fundamentally altered the regional security architecture. These conflicts were not isolated military engagements but existential

confrontations that reinforced zero sum security perceptions among regional actors. Israel's repeated experience of conventional warfare against numerically superior coalitions contributed to a strategic calculus that emphasized deterrence over parity.

Within this context, Israel is widely believed to have developed a nuclear weapons capability beginning in the late 1960s, centred around the Dimona nuclear facility. While Israel maintains a policy of nuclear ambiguity, neither confirming nor denying possession of nuclear weapons, this posture has functioned as a de facto deterrent. The strategic effect has been significant. Since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, no full scale interstate war involving Israel has occurred, with conflicts increasingly shifting toward asymmetric warfare, proxy engagements, and limited cross border hostilities.

However, even in present day Israel's non participation in the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons presents a major structural obstacle to the establishment of a WMDFZ. Its position is rooted in the absence of comprehensive regional peace and mutual recognition. This creates a security paradox where Israel views nuclear deterrence as essential for survival, while neighbouring states perceive that very deterrent as the primary justification for regional proliferation pressures.

### ***Iran Iraq War and the Normalization of Chemical Weapons Use***

The Iran Iraq War from 1980 to 1988 represents one of the most significant cases of chemical weapons use in modern history. Iraq employed chemical agents including mustard gas and nerve agents against Iranian military forces and civilian populations, as well as against Kurdish civilians in Halabja. This widespread use occurred despite Iraq being a signatory to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, exposing severe weaknesses in international enforcement mechanisms at the time. Chemical weapons during this conflict served multiple strategic purposes. They compensated for battlefield stalemates, acted as tools of terror, and functioned as instruments of coercive deterrence.

The failure of the international community to respond decisively during the war contributed to a regional perception that the use of chemical weapons could occur with limited consequences. The legacy of the Iran Iraq War strongly influenced later international efforts to strengthen chemical weapons law, culminating in the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, the Middle East remains one of the few regions where key states have not fully acceded to or ratified the Convention, undermining regional confidence in collective disarmament commitments.

### ***Gulf Wars and the Politicization of WMD Allegations***

The 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War further entrenched the centrality of WMD narratives in Middle Eastern security discourse. Iraq's suspected chemical and biological weapons programs were a central justification for international military intervention, UN sanctions, and

intrusive disarmament regimes under the authority of the Security Council. While post war inspections confirmed the dismantling of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons capabilities, the experience reinforced a broader regional lesson.

WMD possession or even suspicion of possession could dramatically alter power relations and international responses. This politicization of WMD allegations generated deep mistrust, particularly regarding selective enforcement and double standards in non proliferation. These experiences continue to shape regional scepticism toward externally driven disarmament initiatives, complicating negotiations on a WMDFZ that would require intrusive verification mechanisms and high levels of transparency.

### ***The Iranian Nuclear Program and the JCPOA***

Iran's nuclear program represents one of the most consequential proliferation challenges in the Middle East. As a non nuclear weapon state party to the NPT, Iran is legally prohibited from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, concerns over uranium enrichment, transparency, and potential weaponization led to prolonged diplomatic confrontation. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action concluded in 2015 represented a landmark arms control agreement, imposing strict limitations on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. The agreement demonstrated that legally binding verification regimes under the International Atomic Energy Agency could effectively constrain nuclear proliferation within the region.

However, the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA in 2018 and the subsequent erosion of compliance significantly weakened confidence in diplomatic non proliferation frameworks. For many regional actors, this episode illustrated the fragility of arms control agreements absent sustained political commitment, raising doubts about the feasibility of a comprehensive WMDFZ without robust security guarantees and institutional backing. In October 2025, Iran officially stated that the JCPOA had ended and that restrictions were considered terminated, arguing that the deal's limits no longer applied after its expiration.

Iran has insisted it will adhere to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, even as it continues nuclear activities beyond previous JCPOA limits. In practice, Iran's nuclear programme remains a central proliferation concern. The IAEA has reported insufficient access to key facilities and incomplete accounting for enriched uranium, raising the possibility of future non-compliance declarations under the NPT's safeguards regime. Negotiations to revive or replace the JCPOA have occurred intermittently between Iran, European powers and the United States, but no comprehensive new agreement has been concluded as of 2026. Talks have stalled amid disagreement over enrichment limits, sanctions relief and verification measures.

### ***Syria and the Failure of Chemical Weapons Deterrence***

The Syrian Civil War, beginning in 2011, reintroduced chemical weapons as an active threat to international peace and security. Multiple confirmed uses of sarin and chlorine against

civilian populations prompted global condemnation and led to Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013. Under UN and Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) supervision, Syria declared and dismantled significant portions of its chemical stockpile. Nevertheless, subsequent allegations of continued chemical weapons use highlighted limitations in verification, enforcement, and accountability, particularly in internal armed conflicts involving non state actors. The Syrian case illustrates a critical challenge for a WMDFZ. While interstate deterrence frameworks may constrain state behaviour, internal conflicts and fragmented authority structures create pathways for WMD use that are not easily addressed through traditional arms control treaties.

### ***Biological Weapons and Regional Vulnerabilities***

Unlike nuclear and chemical weapons, biological weapons have not been widely documented in active Middle Eastern conflicts. However, the absence of confirmed use should not be interpreted as the absence of risk. Rapid advances in biotechnology, weak regulatory frameworks in conflict zones, and the presence of non state armed groups raise significant concerns. The Biological Weapons Convention prohibits the development and possession of biological weapons, yet lacks a formal verification mechanism. In a region marked by fragile states and limited institutional capacity, this absence poses a serious challenge to confidence building and compliance. Any WMDFZ would need to address biological threats through enhanced transparency, public health cooperation, and biosecurity measures.

### ***Treaty Participation Gaps and Legal Asymmetries***

One of the central legal challenges to establishing a WMDFZ in the Middle East lies in uneven treaty participation. Israel is not a party to the NPT or the CWC. Egypt has signed but not ratified the CWC, explicitly linking its position to Israel's nuclear status. Several states have delayed full implementation of biological weapons obligations. These asymmetries create a circular security dilemma. States condition their disarmament on the actions of rivals, resulting in collective inaction. This is further compounded by chronic political instability across the region.

Ongoing civil wars and internal armed conflicts in states such as Syria, Yemen, Libya and historically Iraq have produced fragmented authority structures, competing governments and the presence of powerful non state armed groups. In such environments, even where formal treaty obligations exist, effective implementation, verification, and enforcement become practically unfeasible. Central governments often lack full territorial control, rendering compliance with inspection regimes, stockpile declarations and monitoring mechanisms legally and operationally impossible. Overcoming this deadlock requires a phased, region wide approach that integrates security assurances, mutual recognition and legally binding commitments under international law.

## **Regional Deterrence Dynamics**

Across the Middle East, nuclear deterrence remains implicit, while chemical weapons have been used explicitly in past conflicts. The absence of a comprehensive Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone has contributed to mutual suspicion, arms accumulation, and security dilemmas among regional states. Rather than ensuring long term stability, reliance on WMD based deterrence has often shifted conflicts toward proxy warfare, increased civilian vulnerability and complicated peace processes. These dynamics continue to fuel international calls for confidence building measures and regional disarmament frameworks.

## **Evolution of the Middle East WMDFZ Plans**

The concept of establishing a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East has evolved gradually over several decades, shaped by regional conflicts, asymmetric security perceptions, and global non-proliferation efforts. The proposal initially emerged as a nuclear-focused initiative and later expanded to include chemical and biological weapons, reflecting the region's conflict history and WMD usage patterns. The earliest formal push came in 1974, when Egypt and Iran jointly introduced a proposal at the UN calling for a Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East. This marked the first multilateral recognition that regional security could not be separated from nuclear restraint.

## **Role of NPT Review Conferences**

The evolution of the WMDFZ concept gained significant momentum during the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). As part of the package enabling the indefinite extension of the NPT, States Parties adopted a resolution on the Middle East, calling for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. This was a critical turning point, as it formally expanded the scope from nuclear weapons to all WMDs. Subsequent NPT Review Conferences (2000, 2005, 2010) repeatedly reaffirmed this commitment.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference was particularly significant, as it mandated the convening of a regional conference on the Middle East WMDFZ. However, disagreements over participation, sequencing, and security guarantees led to repeated postponements, highlighting deep-rooted regional mistrust. Frustration over stalled progress eventually led to action outside the NPT framework, culminating in UN General Assembly mandated conferences from 2019 onwards, which continue to meet annually despite the absence of universal regional participation. In effect, the 2022 Review Conference reaffirmed political support but produced no operational advances, reinforcing the view that progress on a Middle East WMDFZ has increasingly shifted from the NPT review process to the UN General Assembly framework.

## **Challenges to NWFZs and WMDFZs**

### ***Verification and Compliance Challenges***

A central challenge to both NWFZs and prospective WMDFZs is the effective verification of compliance. These zones rely heavily on international organisations to monitor adherence, yet verification is often constrained by state sovereignty concerns, restricted access, and incomplete transparency. In politically sensitive regions, verification mechanisms are frequently perceived as intrusive, leading to resistance or selective cooperation by states.

### ***Challenges Faced by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)***

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays a critical role in verifying compliance with nuclear non-proliferation commitments in NWFZs. However, its effectiveness is limited by mandate restrictions, as it can only operate within the scope of safeguards agreements voluntarily accepted by states. Additional challenges include insufficient access to undeclared sites, delays in inspections, and political pressure from member states. In regions with high mistrust, the IAEA's findings are often politicised, undermining confidence in its technical assessments and complicating consensus on enforcement actions.

### ***Challenges Faced by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)***

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is responsible for implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention and verifying the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles. In conflict-affected regions, the OPCW faces severe challenges related to security constraints, access limitations and evidence preservation.

Disputes over attribution of responsibility, allegations of bias and the destruction or concealment of evidence have weakened enforcement. These challenges are particularly evident in cases where chemical weapons are allegedly used during ongoing conflicts, limiting the OPCW's ability to ensure full compliance. More recently, issues related to dual use of chemicals and transfer of precursor materials have occurred.

### ***Political and Security Constraints***

NWFZs and WMDFZs operate within complex regional security environments marked by unresolved conflicts, power asymmetries and external interventions. States may view WMD capabilities or ambiguity surrounding them as essential to national survival, reducing incentives to fully commit to disarmament zones. In the absence of credible security assurances, states often prioritise deterrence over compliance, weakening the normative strength of these zones.

## **Non State Actors and Emerging Threats**

Traditional arms control and verification regimes were conceived primarily to regulate state behaviour, operating on assumptions of centralized authority, territorial control and compliance through legally binding treaty obligations. In the Middle East, these assumptions are increasingly undermined by the presence of Violent Non State Actors that operate outside formal international legal frameworks.

Armed groups such as terrorist organizations, militias, and insurgent movements have demonstrated both intent and capability to exploit gaps in governance and security. In conflict affected states where institutional authority is fragmented, the risk of diversion, theft, or illicit trafficking of nuclear, chemical, or biological materials is significantly heightened. Facilities holding dual use materials may lack adequate physical protection, while weak border controls and porous frontiers facilitate cross border smuggling networks.

The threat posed by non state actors is particularly acute in relation to chemical and biological weapons. Unlike nuclear weapons, which require complex infrastructure and state level resources, chemical agents and biological pathogens can be produced, stored and transported with comparatively lower technical thresholds. The confirmed use of chemical agents by non state actors in recent conflicts underscores the limitations of existing disarmament frameworks that focus primarily on state stockpiles and declarations.

International legal instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention impose obligations on states to prevent non state acquisition, yet enforcement depends on national implementation measures that are often absent or ineffective in fragile and conflict affected states. Similarly, Nuclear Weapon Free Zone treaties lack explicit mechanisms to address non state actor threats, relying instead on state capacity to enforce compliance within their territories.

Despite its legal strength, UNSCR 1540 is implementation dependent. It assumes that states possess stable governance, effective institutions, and enforcement capacity. In many Middle Eastern contexts marked by civil war, fragmented authority, or weak state control, these assumptions do not hold. Governments may lack the ability to secure facilities, monitor borders, or enforce legislation across their entire territory.

## **Humanitarian Impact of Weapons of Mass Destruction**

### ***Mass Casualties and Civilian Harm***

The use of Weapons of Mass Destruction results in indiscriminate and large scale civilian casualties. Unlike conventional weapons, WMDs cannot be contained within military targets, leading to the loss of civilian life on a massive scale. Vulnerable populations including women,

children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected, often with limited access to immediate medical care.

### ***Long-Term Health Consequences***

WMD use produces severe and lasting health impacts. Nuclear weapons expose populations to radiation, increasing risks of cancer and genetic damage. Chemical weapons can cause chronic respiratory illness, neurological damage, and long term disabilities. Biological weapons may lead to widespread disease outbreaks with prolonged public health consequences. These effects can persist for generations, overwhelming healthcare systems and reducing life expectancy.

### ***Environmental and Infrastructure Damage***

The humanitarian impact of WMDs extends beyond human casualties to include severe environmental degradation. Nuclear detonations contaminate land and water with radioactive material, while chemical agents can poison soil and water supplies. Essential infrastructure hospitals, housing, transportation, and agriculture is often destroyed or rendered unusable, delaying recovery and reconstruction for decades.

### ***Forced Displacement and Refugee Crises***

The destruction caused by WMDs frequently results in mass displacement of populations. Contaminated areas may become uninhabitable, forcing communities to flee permanently. This displacement places pressure on neighbouring states, contributes to regional instability, and creates long-term humanitarian emergencies requiring sustained international assistance.

### ***Psychological and Social Trauma***

Survivors of WMD attacks often experience severe psychological trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and long-term mental health disorders. Social structures are disrupted as families are separated, livelihoods are lost, and trust within communities erodes. The fear associated with WMDs also has a deterrent psychological effect, extending humanitarian harm beyond physical damage.

## **Relevant Legal Framework**

### ***Resolutions***

1. UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/50/70, 1995 2.
- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/546, 2019 3.
- UNSCR 687 (1991) 4. UNSCR 1540 (2004) 5. UNSCR 2117 (2013) 6. UNSCR 2209 (2015) 7. UNSCR 2220 (2015)
8. UNSCR 2231 (2015)

## ***Relevant International Treaties***

1. Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
2. Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)
3. Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)
4. Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)
5. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)
6. Geneva Protocol, 1925
7. Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM)
8. International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT)
9. IAEA Safeguards Agreements (INFCIRC/153)
10. Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

## **Conclusion**

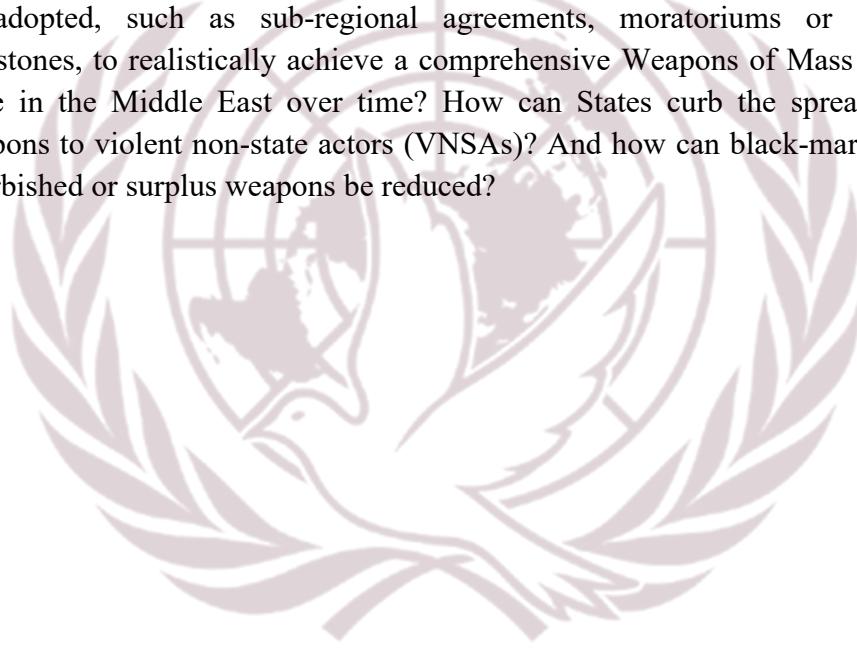
The establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East is not only a legal and diplomatic imperative, but also a moral and security necessity for a region that has repeatedly endured the consequences of armed conflict and political instability. The Middle East has experienced the devastating use of chemical weapons, persistent nuclear ambiguity, and a climate of mistrust driven by unresolved territorial disputes, proxy wars and strategic competition. These realities highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive, verifiable and enforceable framework that addresses nuclear, chemical, and biological threats together rather than separately.

Delegates must now move beyond rhetoric and focus on tangible, actionable solutions that can break the cycle of deadlock. This requires a principled negotiation process that addresses the core security concerns of every state in the region, including Israel's nuclear ambiguity, the future of the JCPOA and the enduring impact of ongoing conflicts. Delegates should prioritize establishing clear timelines for treaty adherence, robust verification and enforcement mechanisms, and credible security guarantees that make disarmament politically feasible.

## **Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)**

1. What is the exact definition of the proposed WMD-Free Zone? Which countries and territories are included in the Middle East zone? How can verification, monitoring, and inspection mechanisms be designed to ensure compliance by all regional states, including those that are not party to existing disarmament treaties, without compromising national sovereignty?

3. What role should the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons play in overseeing implementation, inspections, and confidence-building measures within the Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone? How
4. can the United Nations address concerns regarding undeclared or ambiguous Weapons of Mass Destruction capabilities in the region, while preventing selective enforcement or politicization of disarmament obligations? How should violations of the Weapons of
5. Mass Destruction-Free Zone be addressed, including enforcement mechanisms, sanctions, dispute resolution processes, and the role of the United Nations Security Council in cases of non-compliance? What steps can be taken to prevent external powers
6. from undermining the Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone through military alliances, nuclear deterrence arrangements, or indirect support for Weapons of Mass Destruction-related programs in the region? What phased or incremental approaches can be adopted, such as sub-regional agreements, moratoriums or confidence-based
7. milestones, to realistically achieve a comprehensive Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East over time? How can States curb the spread of modernized weapons to violent non-state actors (VNSAs)? And how can black-market circulation of
8. refurbished or surplus weapons be reduced?



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