STATEMENT

by the delegation of the Russian Federation
at the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty
on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
on the Middle East

Mr. Chairman,

The situation in the Middle East remains very complicated and tense. The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation persists.

The processes of post-conflict settlement in Iraq, including that of Iraq's "disarmament file", are not easy. In this connection, we would like to emphasize that this issue can only be settled by a decision of the UN Security Council which, pursuant to resolution 1483, will have to review IAEA and UNMOVIC mandates in that country.

We believe that strengthening WMD non-proliferation regime in this region is an essential part of the comprehensive Middle East settlement. We note with regret that so far there has been little progress in establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as well as in implementing relevant resolutions of the 1995 NPT Review Conference and the provisions of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

At the same time, we hope that the well-known recent shifts in the position of several countries of the region in non-proliferation matters may change the situation in terms of making the Middle East a WMD-free zone in the long run. It is important that Israel, too, demonstrates political will and departs from its position regarding the NPT, place all its nuclear activities under the IAEA verification. In general this requires a clear step-by-step approach that would engage all existing negotiating mechanisms.
involving, in particular, the UN, the IAEA and other relevant international organizations.

Of course, establishing WMD-free zones goes beyond the nuclear non-proliferation issues per se. Therefore, the Middle East states that have not yet signed or ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention must do so as soon as possible.

By and large, we would like to stress that today the Middle East, as never before, needs to break out of the vicious circle of violence and confrontation and create an entirely new regional climate based on mutual trust, stability and security. Nuclear non-proliferation regime based on the NPT is an integral element of this architecture.

Thank you for your attention.