STATEMENT

by the Russian Delegation at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The Establishment of a Zone Free from Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East

Geneva, May 2008
Mr. Chairman,

Russia regards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) as an effective contribution to strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. We welcome the free will of the States that have expressed their wish to join their efforts in establishing such zones. Such zones provide an important instrument to ensure peace and stability at regional and global levels.

We believe that the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as means of their delivery in the Middle East would contribute greatly to achieving these goals. Russia, along with other Middle East Quartet mediators, makes most vigorous efforts to promote the negotiating process in this region, considering a lasting peace to be a key factor contributing to regional security.

The recent developments in the area of WMD non-proliferation in this region have given rise to cautious optimism. We are referring to Libya voluntarily abandoning its WMD programmes. No evidence has been found to suggest that Iraq developed a military nuclear programme.

Certainly, to our mind, the best-case scenario in the Middle East would involve establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We believe that the resolution on the Middle East passed at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and supported in 2000, still remains important. We have been consistent in voting for respective UN General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. Chairman,

It seems that strengthening the NPT-based nuclear non-proliferation regime in the Middle East and, more importantly, turning the region into a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is the essential element for creating a completely new climate of mutual trust, stability and security in the region. Certainly, it is crucial that all countries of the Middle East ratify the CTBT.

In our view, one of the first steps to implement this NWFZ concept should be expanding the IAEA safeguards activities to cover all countries of the region. It is
imperative that the States of the Middle East fully accept the Agency’s safeguards, bringing into force Additional Protocols to the Safeguards Agreements.

The Middle East is a dynamic region with growing energy needs. We know that a number of States of the region have announced their intention to develop atomic energy. Supporting the inalienable right of all Parties to the NPT to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy on an equal and non-discriminatory basis, we believe that a multilateral approach to developing atomic energy in the Middle East would serve the best interests of the States of the region both in terms of security and economic benefit. Russia’s initiatives with this regard are well known.

We would like to reiterate that a lasting, just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East is required, as well as a climate of mutual trust and predictability in relations between the States and making the region free of all weapons of mass destruction.

Thank you for your attention.