STATEMENT

by the delegation of the Russian Federation

at the Second Session
of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties
to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons
and all Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

Geneva, April 30, 2018
Mr. Chairman,

Colleagues,

The establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDFZ) in accordance with the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East is one of the central issues within the NPT review process. As a co-sponsor of the mentioned resolution, Russia is seriously concerned about the current situation around the WMDFZ. For the period since the 2015 Review Conference, no tangible progress has been gained in this area. We approach the middle of the NPT review cycle with no results achieved. In case of further lack of progress on this track we could find ourselves pressed for time once again at the 2020 Review Conference.

Assertions that the NPT review process is not a most suitable format to discuss the issue are misleading. The Resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference was an important element of the final document of the 1995 Conference based on which the NPT was extended indefinitely.

As a co-sponsor of this Resolution, the Russian Federation for many years has been making persistent and dedicated efforts aimed at its implementation. We are ready to further facilitate this process. We believe that convening a WMDFZ Conference remains a relevant and most feasible task in the context of the implementation of the mentioned Resolution.

We should not procrastinate with convening a WMDFZ Conference, as well as getting agreement on its organizational modalities and substantive aspects. Time is running out for 2020. It is important to use it wisely in order to lay ground for adopting a relevant decision at the Review Conference.

The proposals presented by the Russian Federation at the first session of the Preparatory Committee in 2017 on convening a WMDFZ Conference could become a good basis for that. We recall that Russian proposals found wide support of Parties to the Treaty.
They were based on the following three key principles:

- All decisions on substantive matters at the Conference and within the framework of its Preparatory process should be taken on the basis of consensus.
- Participation of all the States of the region without exception is desirable.
- Thorough preparatory work is required for reaching agreement on the organizational modalities of the Conference (draft agenda, rules of procedure, final document that would determine further steps on WMDFZ).

We think it would be useful to hold a meeting with the participation of countries of the Middle East region, co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, representative of the UN Secretary-General and future president of the Review Conference to discuss all details of the relevant decision. It should be organized as soon as possible but no later than early 2019. Geneva could become a venue for such meeting.

For our part, we are ready to do our best to contribute to the preparation of the event. We call on other co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East – the US and the UK – to take the same honest position and immediately start a constructive dialogue on this issue in the NPT framework without any preconditions.

Thank you for your attention.