Mr. Chair,

Action 9 of the 2010 NPT final document encourages the establishment of further nuclear-weapon-free zones as well as the ratification of NWFZ treaties and their relevant protocols by all concerned States. We welcome steps taken to implement this action, notably with regard to the signature and ratification of protocols to existing zones. We encourage further efforts in this area, in particular on the SEANWFZ.

NWFZ, and their accompanying protocols, strengthen the non-proliferation regime and help create a better environment for nuclear disarmament. They provide security benefits to their States parties via the legally binding negative security assurance, but also to the global community by gradually limiting the geographical area where nuclear weapons can be deployed.

Mr. Chair,

On the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction (MEWMDFZ) and their delivery systems, we regret that the efforts undertaken in the past NPT cycle did not bear fruit so far. We also regret that disagreement on this particular regional topic,
important as it is, was the primary reason for a failed NPT conference in 2015. In light of the NPT’s global importance we hope this will not happen again.

We reaffirm that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East remains valid until its goals and objectives are achieved, and deem important that we rapidly make progress in implementing it.

The three co-sponsors of the resolution (USA, UK, RUS) bear special responsibility under this resolution and we call on them to cooperate on this topic. Switzerland has actively supported efforts to implement the resolution and the practical steps agreed in the 2010 Action Plan. We contributed to the process guided by the Finnish facilitator following the 2010 NPT Review Conference, notably through the support of consultations in Glion and Geneva in 2013 and 2014, which brought all relevant parties to the table.

We have taken due note of the adoption by the UNGA of decision 73/546 entrusting the UN Secretary General to convene a conference on the zone, to be held in November of this year. Switzerland is convinced that a number of factors need to be considered when moving forward on the topic of a MEWMDFZ:

- One essential factor for success is to rely on an inclusive process, from the preparatory phase, including agreeing on the agenda and modalities, to the holding of the Conference(s). A process towards the establishment of a zone cannot be dictated. All relevant actors have to be on board.
- Another essential factor is to ensure that efforts take place in the context of a broad regional dialogue addressing security and disarmament challenges in the spirit of mutual respect.
- Lastly, the 1999 UNDC guidelines for the establishment of NWFZ (A/54/42) should be an important reference point to steer effort towards the establishment of the zone.

Thank you for your attention.