CHAPTER SEVEN

ESTABLISHING AN NWFZ IN THE MIDDLE EAST

*I can smell the wind of change blowing in the air.*  
(NN)

1. *Introduction*

The security tensions in the world, especially in the Middle East, give rise to the dangers caused by the introduction of nuclear weapons in the region. After Israeli nuclear capabilities came to the attention of States in the region, they adopted different stances. On the one hand, Iraq worked hard for acquiring military nuclear capabilities, so as to introduce counter deterrence against Israeli nuclear weapons. On the other, Iran, in 1974, introduced a proposal to call for the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East. It was supported by Egypt and other States in the region.

In the region, this proposal has been received over the years with both caution and acceptance. Even Israel, the only NWS in the region, has accepted the proposal. However, there are differences among States in the region concerning the steps required to achieve the end goal of the proposal, i.e., establishing the NWFZ.

Israel associates negotiations concerning nuclear disarmament with developments in the peace process. It maintains that the establishment of an NWFZ has to be negotiated among States in the region. However, other States in the region view that such negotiations are not imperative for the establishment of an NWFZ and that it is not necessary to associate the nuclear issue with the peace process. All other States in the region are members of the NPT and their nuclear facilities are placed under IAEA safeguards. Hence, Israel is thereby invited to join the NPT as an NNWS and to place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. This will ensure that its programme remains peaceful, similar to other programmes in the region, while at the same time will work towards achieving the goal of establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East.

In this chapter, the history of efforts to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East will be discussed.
After the idea of establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East captured the attention of international organisations and the different international forums dealing with nuclear disarmament in 1974, it became a long-standing issue in the annual GA meetings and the subject of several studies and resolutions. It was again one of the major issues of the 1995 Extension and Review Conference of the NPT, where a separate resolution was issued specifying the importance of establishing this zone. This position was maintained in the work of the 2000 Review Conference of the NPT and again during the work of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty.

The 1974 GA 3263 (XXIX) Resolution commended the idea of establishing an NWFZ in Middle East. It declared that States in the area “should refrain, on a reciprocal basis, from producing, testing, obtaining, acquiring or in any other way possessing nuclear weapons and called upon them to accede to the NPT.”

The said Resolution which was adopted in the 1995 Review and Extension Conference called upon States in the Middle East to accede to the NPT as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards.

The 2000 Review Conference reaffirmed the importance of the Resolution. It recognised that the resolution will remain valid until its goals and objectives are achieved. The Resolution, which was co-sponsored by the depository States (Russia, the UK and the US), is an essential element of the outcome of the 1995 Conference and of the basis on which the NPT was indefinitely extended without a vote in 1995. The resolution also noted that all States in the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, are party to the NPT and reaffirmed the importance of Israel’s accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realising the goal of universal adherence to the treaty in the Middle East. It requested States of the region to transmit declarations of support to the SG of the UN and to take practical steps towards the objective of establishing an effectively verifiable NWFZ in the Middle East as well as other WMD. It also appealed to all NPT States to cooperate and to exert their utmost efforts to ensure the early establishment by regional parties of a Middle East zone free from

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1 GA, RES 3263 (XXIX), 1974.