



Mission de la République Islamique
d'Iran auprès de l'Union Européenne

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE EUROPEAN UNION, BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG

K.U. LEUVEN

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In the Name of Allah,

The Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Prof. Dr. Mark Waer, Honorable rector of the KU Leuven

Prof. Dr. Bart De Moor, Honorable vice rector of International Policy

Professors,

Students,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I would like to thank Catholic University of Leuven for arranging this event. It is an honor for me to be here in KU Leuven

and among you, dear Professors, Scholars and students. It is a pleasure to have a valuable chance to meet you and exchange views regarding a very important topic “A Middle-East free of Weapons of Mass Destruction”. I am confident that our meeting will be a fruitful one for all of us in order to increase our knowledge on this issue and to get a clearer understanding about constraints and challenges, as well as practical and realistic solutions to achieve that objective. I will have some introductory remarks on the Middle East and Iran first, then I will go into detail of the theme of the meeting and finally I take your comments and questions about the subjects or issues under discussion.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Selecting this subject by the University of Leuven, which is one of the oldest and most prestigious academic institutions in the world, properly reflects the importance of the Middle-East, its related issues and impact of its developments on other parts of the world, the fact that through brief look at news headlines and governments policies and efforts, can be well understood. Today, attention of great powers has been drawn into the Middle East. Growth and stability or backwardness and instability, security trends and tendency towards arms, especially nuclear weapons and WMD are very important to the people of the region and all players as well. The term Middle East carry significant connotation in itself and despite widespread usage of

the Middle East term in international politics, it has not been associated with a single definition. Historians, journalists and politicians use the term according to their own criteria. However, from very common perspective, Middle East stretches in geographical terms, from Egypt in the West to Pakistan and Afghanistan in the East. Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea in the north and Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea in the south are geographical boundaries of this area. The area consists mainly of Arabic countries as well as Non-Arab countries like Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Middle East's importance can be measured from different aspects of geography, culture and economic development and of course politics. We don't want to talk about various dimensions of the position of this region because it takes much time, and you have much information on it, but very briefly, Middle East has significant place in the world. Further to three grand civilizations of ancient Persia, Egypt and Mesopotamia, this region has been cradle of three Monotheistic religions: Jewish, Christianity and Islam, and holy cities such as Mecca, Medina and Beit-Ol Moghaddas, Jerusalem in other words, are located in the Middle East. This region also has a unique geographical location compared to its neighborhood, and is like a bridge; connecting Asia, Europe and Africa. Containing waterways and water bodies like the Suez Canal, Straits of Hormuz, the Bosphorus, Dardanelles, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Aden, the Mediterranean Sea, Oman Sea, Black Sea, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and finally the Caspian Sea, makes the Middle East strategically

important. ME is also of utmost importance in terms of energy. 60 percent of the world's known reserves of oil and 35% natural gas reserves are in the Middle East (mostly in Persian Gulf). In addition to oil and gas reserves, there are very rich and diverse mineral resources contributing to economic growth and development in the region and beyond. Energy has played an important role in regional macropolitics, and interaction of global and regional policies throughout the best part of the 2nd millennium and the third and caused the ME to become a region with international outreach.

As I said, Middle East issues are immensely interlinked and intertwined with trans-regional politics in a manner that directly impact international relations. No major wars, political tension, rise and fall of governments, coups, etc. has happened in this region out of interests of major global powers. First Persian Gulf War in 1990 and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan are just examples to mention, and arms sale, arms race and disarmament difficulties also are directly affected by influence of big powers in the region.

I cannot miss one important factor in this region and that is the great culture, civilizations and aspirations of the peoples and nations there. The essence of so called Arab spring and current developments in the region is the demand of the people to be honored, respected and taken into account to fulfill their wishes and dreams.

One cannot describe ME without addressing Iran and its mutual interdependence with wider region. There are numerous factors that

make Iran a regional power: an ancient civilization stretched once from the Mediterranean to India, a rich culture whose elements, such as Persian language has been and still is spoken or administrative language far beyond its current geographic boundaries are among them. The linguist Nicholas Ostler writes: Persian (Farsi) was not replaced by Arabic, like so many other tongues, and is in the same form today as it was in the 11th century, even as it has adopted the Arabic script.

Iran holds the 4th and 2nd places in the world in oil and gas known resources respectively. As shipping lanes radiate from the Persian Gulf, pipelines will increasingly radiate from the Caspian region to the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, China and the Indian Ocean. The only country that straddles both energy-producing areas is Iran, stretching as it does from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf possesses by some accounts 55 percent of the world's crude oil reserves, and Iran dominates the whole Persian Gulf, from the Shatt al-Arab on the Iraqi border to the Strait of Hormuz 990 kilometers (615 miles) away. Because of its bays, inlets, coves and islands, Iran's coastline inside the Strait of Hormuz is 1,356 nautical miles; the next longest, that of the United Arab Emirates, is only 733 nautical miles. Iran also has 480 kilometers of Arabian Sea frontage, including the port of Chabahar near the Pakistani border. This makes Iran vital to providing warm water, Indian Ocean access to the landlocked Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union.

Iran, is a country with the second largest economy in the region generating economic turnover of over 1 trillion \$US per year, located at one of the most important geostrategic waterways in the world, and the only democracy in the region with parliament and the president based on universal suffrage. (direct vote by the people)

These are factors that turn Iran into a regional power and enable it to play a balancing role for peace-making and peace-building in the region. Furthermore, these factors offer Iran enough room and space to act as a political and security stabilizer which cannot be overlooked or ignored in any regional arrangements. That's why we have been invited as a principal partner to participate in state-building process in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is against this traditional background that Iran could have always put forward substantial proposals in the region such as ME Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Now I will turn to the main theme of the meeting. When we talk about the weapons of mass destruction, we are talking about a threat to the most valuable asset of human collective life: peace and security. Without these two elements, human dignity is undermined and there will be no progress, no development and no life. Peace and security issues are intertwined with elimination of nuclear weapons. We believe that nuclear weapons not only are incapable of keeping the world safer and a more secure place to live, but, in itself, pose a great danger and threat to humanity. Nuclear energy for all, and nuclear weapons for nobody. This is the underlying element of our policy on nuclear disarmament. We have always emphasized on a

comprehensive ban on weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. We strongly believe that nuclear disarmament should be an absolute priority for international community. Countries that have produced and stockpiled weapons of mass destruction must abide by international instruments and non-proliferation regime requirements and take appropriate and immediate verifiable measures for dismantling these weapons.

Iran initiated the idea of Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free zone in 1974 in the United Nations General Assembly and has voted for that resolution ever since. Recent history of the Middle East is one of tension, aggression and occupation. In this context, the Middle East, even without the spice of nuclear weapons, is unstable and subject to conflict and unrest. The life in the region is a much different concept than what you have, here in Europe. Living under occupation, passing heavily armed check points several times a day, going out without the slightest hope to return home safely, and living in war situation for decades, makes the life far beyond imagination for one who lives in Europe. Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone has been initiated and followed to address this situation in the region. That initiative has been perused for more than two decades in the UNGA and finally found its ground to be considered as a vital step in global non-proliferation regime.

Nuclear weapons are dangerously complicating factors, affecting security building and posing regional challenges, most notably in the Middle East. Some regions have chosen to address potential nuclear

problems, including testing and proliferation by negotiating Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone treaties, in which countries, commit themselves not to manufacture, acquire, test, or possess nuclear weapons. The right to establish such zones was affirmed by Article VII of the NPT and reaffirmed by the UN General Assembly in 1975 when criteria for such zones was also outlined. Efforts towards establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East have recently led to commitments agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference to hold a conference on a Zone free of Nuclear and other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East (MEWMDZFZ) in 2012, inviting all states from the region. Unfortunately this has been canceled by the US and Israel. Establishment of a “weapons of mass destruction free zone” has been repeatedly postponed in the benefit of Israel to maintain its nuclear monopoly, further destabilizing the region, and keeping the threat of other’s peaceful nuclear activity as a primary excuse for its militarism.

Iran as a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, has kept its military expenditures below 3% of its GDP, in comparison to others in the region (some neighboring countries over 5%, Israel over 7% and some well over 10%) and has publicly pledged its opposition to nuclear weapons development, has subjected itself to thorough international inspections, as a confidence building measure, Israel has done none of the above and has at least 200 nuclear warheads. To the extreme surprise of international public opinion, Iran is being severely punished and threatened with military strike for its absolutely

peaceful nuclear program. Israel on the other hand, is supported with unparalleled economic, military and diplomatic support. I confine myself to the theme of this meeting and will not go into details of so-called Iran nuclear dossier which is a bold manifestation of politicization of very simple issue, which is using peaceful nuclear energy, based on our recognized rights in international instruments. If asked about that dossier in the question time, and I encourage the audience to do so, I will explain in more details the double-standard of big powers towards my country.

States parties to the NPT must achieve a world free from nuclear weapons, in particular the unequivocal undertaking by Nuclear Weapons States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The continued existence of tens of thousands of nuclear warheads in the stockpile of the nuclear-weapon States, including Israel, most of them on high-trigger alert and their day by day modernization, constitute the most serious threat to the survival of mankind. Non-nuclear weapon states, do not feel secure living under the blade of using or threat of using of nuclear weapons. Maintaining nuclear weapons stockpiles and strategically rely on them, shall not guide possessors to the resolve that is required for moving toward elimination of either the risk of their use or their vertical or horizontal proliferation.

According to the public reliable sources, nuclear weapons spending, have sharply increased globally from 2010 till now, and according to the most conservative estimations, that will reach to one trillion

dollars on nuclear weapons and their direct support systems over the next decade.

Every moment in the Middle East region, carries potential horrors of the nuclear weapons arsenal which belong to Israel, and the entire region is a time bomb whose trigger is violence and crime.

The Islamic republic of Iran has spared no efforts for establishment of a nuclear free zone in the Middle East. Along this line, we reemphasize on immediate, full, and unconditional dismantlement of weapons of mass destruction in the ME and implementation of the 1995 Resolution on this region.

Establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction is extremely important in putting an end to the gravest threat of these weapons in the region and in the world. The threat posed by possession of nuclear weapons by Israel and its refusal to submit itself to the NPT and placing its nuclear facilities under the IAEA safeguards has prompted a number of States in the region not to accede to international instruments dealing with weapons of mass destruction, most notably CWC and BWC. The Islamic Republic of Iran declared in advance its readiness for active participation in the scheduled 2012 Conference on the Middle East and stressed that an agreed plan of action and timetable for universality of the NPT in the Middle East, should be the only top priority at the said Conference. However, all parties to the treaty witnessed again that the opposition of the US in support of Israel impeded convening of the 2012

Conference after decades. The unilateral decision by the United States on postponement of this conference is a bold disregard of unanimous decision of the 2010 Review Conference, planning and intensive consultation by the facilitator, undermining the determination and cooperation of Iran and Arab state parties, and a serious setback to NPT. It is a clear indication that the great powers pay no heed to the repeated calls by the international community to place clandestine nuclear weapon activities of their most favored ally in the region under international non-proliferation regime.

The Islamic republic of Iran as a victim of weapons of mass destruction over the recent decades, firmly believe that the international community must find a speedy way towards total elimination of the common threat of deliberate or accidental nuclear detonation. The nature of the nuclear weapons and its immediate catastrophic impacts on the human beings must oblige us, to collectively work for the sake of mankind's survival. The upcoming 2015 NPT Review Conference can create a momentum leading to absolute illegality and illegitimacy of all nuclear weapons and anticipate their prompt elimination.

Despite repeated calls by the international community, demonstrated in the Resolution on the Middle East, adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, related resolutions of the General Assembly, the IAEA and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Israel, confident of the political and military support of those that have passionate attachment to it, has neither acceded to the NPT, nor

placed its nuclear facilities under the full-scope of IAEA safeguards. This is the only obstacle for the establishment of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in the Middle East. Peace and stability cannot be achieved in the Middle East while a massive nuclear arsenal continues to threaten the region and beyond.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, we are living in a region that is boiling hot in terms of politics and chilling cold in terms of friendship. Political ambitions of colonialist great powers have ripped apart the countries and nations. Conflict is imminent with the slightest disagreement. We are trying hard to show that the region has had enough wars and hostilities, enough turmoil, enough grievances, enough occupation and enough weapons of mass destruction. We need loving hands stretched to us to take off and to act as the cradle of great civilizations, as it always has been.

I thank you for your patience and I would be happy to take your questions and comments.