

POLICY BRIEF

FOR THE MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE ON A WMD/DVs FREE ZONE

No. 6 • DECEMBER 2011

Welcome, Mr. Facilitator!

The Track II Community Endorses Ambassador Jaakko Laajava

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The 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) proposed a regional gathering to be held in 2012 on the establishment of a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) free zone in the Middle East including their delivery vehicles (DVs). In order to prepare this important Middle East Conference (MEC), the NPT's Plan of Action for the Middle East provided for the appointment of a facilitator by the UN Secretary General and the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East in consultation with the regional states.² The Facilitator is endowed "with a mandate to support [the] implementation of the 1995 Resolution by conducting consultations with the States of the region in that regard and undertaking preparations for the convening of the 2012 Conference."³ Furthermore, the Facilitator is to assist in the implementation of follow-on steps agreed at the Middle East Conference by the participating states. His mandate also includes reporting to the 2015 NPT Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee meetings.

Habemus Facilitator!

After the 2010 NPT decision to convene the MEC in 2012, the selection of a facilitator and host country was hampered by disagreement among the depository states, Middle Eastern countries, and the United Nations Secretariat. Three states offered their services to facilitate the MEC: Canada, Finland, and the Netherlands. According to officials, the Arab states did not support Canada and there were reservations about the Netherlands due to its NATO membership. Then on October

14, 2011, the United Nations News Center published a short note, stating that the UN Secretary General and the governments of Russia, the UK, and the U.S. are "pleased to announce the appointment of Jaakko Laajava, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, as facilitator and the designation of Finland as the host Government for the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction."⁴ Ambassador Laajava, the former Finnish Ambassador to the United States (1996-2001) and the United Kingdom (2005-2010), himself believed that the choice was influenced by a little bit of canny diplomacy, by Finland's strong track-record as a mediator and peace broker, and by the country's consistent support for the NPT.⁵

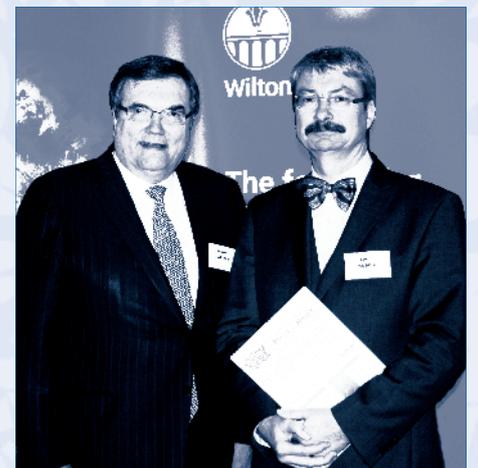
The Major Challenges and Opportunities to the MEC and the Facilitator

We support Ambassador Laajava in creating the political environment in which the MEC can take place, be successful, and offer sustainable results. The Facilitator and all other actors concerned with the Middle East Conference will have to deal with a variety of challenges (see Box No. 1).

A Middle East free of all WMD and DVs would improve the mutual security of all states thereby reducing the regional security dilemma. At present this might not be recognized by all regional players, some of which believe that increasing their military

Abstract

Within the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST, experts from the Middle East and beyond have explicitly discussed various questions regarding the role and tasks of the Finnish Facilitator of the 2012 Middle East Conference envisaged by the international community. In this POLICY BRIEF we express the expectations, hopes, concerns, and recommendations of the assembled experts to Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and his team. We all join in supporting him in his efforts to create the political will to make the Middle East Conference happen, successful, and sustainable. The Facilitator will have to deal with a variety of challenges and opportunities. To these we propose some options and recommendations. In general, we encourage the Facilitator to take an active and impartial role during the process that we hope will lead to the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East. ■



Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and Bernd W. Kubbig

Box No. 1: A Checklist for Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and His Team

Challenges/ Opportunities	Proposed Options
Overcoming the “specifically pronounced”⁶ security dilemma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cooperative Security Concept,⁷ with its normative, analytical, procedural, and organizational elements, is a viable framework for a strategy to increase each state’s security by reducing and finally overcoming the regional security dilemma.
De-escalating regional tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MEC could be used as the forum for direct dialogue and for building confidence as part of a broader regional peace strategy: states that talk don’t shoot.
Resolving the traditionally unfruitful juxtaposition of “Nuclear Disarmament First!” vs. “Regional Peace First!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arms build-ups are a multi-causal phenomenon in which conflict formations are the most important factor. At the same time, arms control plays a relevant role in lowering tensions, increasing stability, and thereby decreasing the likelihood of war. Rather than discussing which must come first, it is important to notice that peace and disarmament are mutually reinforcing and share a common goal: enhanced security for all.
Making the Middle East Conference happen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a WMD Free Zone is an initiative that originated in the Middle East. It is not a goal in itself, but a specific tool for increasing security that should be taken seriously. Inclusiveness is vital. The participation of all states could be fostered by the fact that any results need to be ‘freely arrived at’. Crucial countries are likely to join the MEC only if that is compatible with their security interests and hence if they have something to gain from it. The more comprehensive WMD/DVs approach of dealing with all categories ‘en bloc’ will certainly mitigate the fear to be singled out during the MEC.
Examining the reasons why countries in the Middle East want to acquire WMD/DVs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This analysis is a precondition for identifying possible stumbling blocks for embarking on a gradual path on a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East.
Tackling WMD and their DVs at the Middle East Conference as criteria for success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We propose to gradually cope with WMD/DVs by taking advantage of the possible trade-offs not only among nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, but also between them and delivery vehicles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WMD/DVs must be positioned in the overall asymmetrical military situation. WMD/DVs should not be debated as ‘objective’ data reflecting different military capabilities, but as concerns related to specific alliances, nations, and (threat) perceptions associated with specific capabilities.
Intra- and inter-regional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although no single past experience can provide a framework for establishing a regional WMD/DVs Free Zone, much could be learned from efforts at reducing tensions and/or weapons in the Middle East as well as in other regions by drawing upon lessons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> from the arms control-related achievements and failures in the Middle East, especially the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) talks (intra-regional learning); and from the experiences of nuclear weapon free zones, regional verification mechanisms, and the record of Cold War-era agreements (inter-regional learning).
Embedding the MEC in the ‘Arab Spring’ and new developments in the Middle East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New domestic developments can impact on the Middle East Conference directly and indirectly, for good and for ill. While the emergence of new actors might create new barriers for arms control, we suggest focusing not only on well-known regional problems, but also on (potentially) positive developments.
Making the MEC sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is vital to design the MEC as a process and to provide adequate mechanisms for verifying the incremental arms reduction measures and the zone itself. One could learn from existing verification arrangements in other regions. It is imperative to foster arms control institutions in the Middle East such as Regional Security Centers. They could be implemented within a couple of years, with an emphasis on conflict prevention, mediation, and arms control/reduction concepts.

Source: Slightly adapted from POLICY BRIEF No. 1 by Bernd W. Kubbig, Christian Weidlich, and Roberta Mulas.

capability is the only way to come to terms with a highly insecure environment. Yet, this dynamic fuels a self-sustaining spiral of armament procurements and increased tensions. Breaking out of such impasse is needed now more than ever. Against this backdrop, recent political developments, captured by the term ‘Arab Spring’, must be analyzed and taken into account as possible positive conditions for the Middle East Conference.

The Middle East Conference represents a golden opportunity for regional states to express their security concerns and foreign policy interests. The comprehensive format of the 2012 gathering offers a unique venue for de-escalating regional tensions through direct dialogue among the participating states. The chances for a successful solution to WMD/DVs proliferation in the region have been increased with the mandate for the conference process which includes nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons plus their delivery vehicles. The inclusion of this broader spectrum of weapons allows for discussion of different categories of armaments ‘en bloc’, thus creating opportunities for trade-offs and compromises. Of course, in order to make this happen, the participating states must be willing to compromise and give something in order to gain something.

Furthermore, the mandate clearly states that all arrangements will be “freely arrived at”. Participants themselves set and shape the agenda in a way compatible with their security needs. Finally, the idea of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction is indigenous to the Middle East; it has not been imported. In fact, for more than three decades this zonal concept has been unanimously endorsed each year at the General Assembly of the United Nations. With the advent of the 2012 Conference, regional actors can demonstrate that their voting is more than just a ritual and that they are now prepared to seriously discuss and later negotiate the conditions for such a zone.

This POLICY BRIEF expresses the sincere appreciation of the assembled experts for the efforts of the Facilitator of the 2012 Middle East Conference. We will provide some background information on the characteristics and tasks of a facilitator. This informs our subsequent discussion of the expectations and recommendations that we would like to propose to Ambassador Laajava. We will also put forward some concrete proposals that we believe might



improve the chances of success for the Facilitator and the Conference.

Facilitating Negotiations: Characteristics and Tasks

Recent literature on facilitation can illuminate the role Ambassador Laajava might play in the Middle East Conference. While the solution to the conflict remains in the hands of the opposing parties, an external actor can nevertheless fulfill important functions. Although facilitation is conceptually close to mediation,⁸ the major objective of facilitation is not the achievement of agreement but the beginning of a process of negotiation. Certain aspects of facilitation deserve special attention:

- *Acting as communication channel:* A facilitator is first and foremost a channel of communication to ensure that all actors have access to all necessary information. The facilitator should act as a “conduit of accurate information, aiming to reassure the actors of their long-term, mutual rationality and thus generating virtuous cycles of cooperation.”⁹
- *Arranging interaction and reducing tensions:* If direct talks between the opponents are problematic, a facilitator can step in to help arrange communication and facilitate interaction, but the ultimate goal is to create a milieu that promotes fair negotiation.¹⁰ Gaining the trust of all sides needs to go hand in hand with facilitating meetings between the conflicting parties. A facilitator’s relative lack of interests in the conflict constitutes his or her primary strength. Indeed, the facilitator’s credibility, impartiality, and supreme interest in the peaceful resolution of the dispute are helpful in reducing tensions.
- *Exploring interests:* A facilitator can perform a valuable service in opening up new political space before the parties have to make a commitment. By allowing the parties to present their cases, by exploring them in depth, framing and ordering the discussion, and questioning the advantages and disadvantages of different options, a facilitator can guide the parties to consider previously unexplored solutions.¹¹
- *Outlining mutually preferable outcomes:* In addition, a successful facilitator can help the parties break out of entrenched positions and can help estimate the range

Box No. 2: The Background of Ambassador Jaakko Laajava



The Finnish Under-Secretary of State and Facilitator of the Middle East Conference was born in 1947 in Joensuu, Finland. Ambassador Laajava holds a BA from Stockholm University and an MA from the University of Helsinki. He was also a Fellow at the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University in 1985–86.

Foreign Service Background

2005–2010	Ambassador of Finland to the United Kingdom, London
2001–2005	Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Helsinki
1996–2001	Ambassador of Finland to the United States, Washington, D.C.
1993–1996	Ambassador and Director General for Political Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Helsinki
1972–1993	Diplomatic assignments including Geneva, Warsaw, Belgrade, Madrid, and Washington, D.C.
1971	Entered Finnish Foreign Service

Source: Curriculum Vitae of Jaakko Laajava. Online, available at <http://www.formin.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=77350&GUID={5D083567-AE2E-4D0D-87F6-72BD6465FFF6}> (December 19, 2011).

of mutually preferable outcomes. By broadening shared knowledge, the facilitator can help better define the range of possible agreement among the conflicting parties.¹²

A facilitator must have good relations with the conflicting sides, without reverting to coercion. That is why it has been said that “small states may be particularly well suited for intervention in disputes between states of unequal power – trustworthy by the weaker state, while being considered non-threatening by the powerful.”¹³ On the basis of our characterization of the tasks of the facilitator, we wish now to endorse the important role of Ambassador Laajava for the MEC by outlining concrete expectations and proposing specific recommendations.

Expectations and Recommendations from Experts of Crucial States

Within the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST experts from the region and beyond have expressly discussed various questions regarding the role and tasks of Ambassador Laajava, the Facilitator of the



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Middle East Conference envisaged by the international community for 2012. We now present the expectations, hopes, concerns, as well as the recommendations of the assembled experts to the Facilitator and his team.

Initial Steps to Get the Middle East Conference Started

We all consider that the first crucial task of the Facilitator will be getting to know the concerns of the countries involved at the official and the societal level by traveling extensively in the region and getting acquainted with representatives of major parties. We are aware that since his appointment Ambassador Laajava has been in a 'listening-mode'. He has already intensively traveled to the Middle East and has visited UN seats and foreign capitals such as New York, Geneva, The Hague, London, and Vienna. We very much welcome the fact that the Facilitator has assembled a professional preparatory team to help him in establishing contacts with Middle Eastern countries and we encourage him in his pursuit of this strategy.

It will be important to continue to consult with all states in the region on substantive and procedural issues in preparation for the Conference, while also involving relevant experts. This 'shuttle diplomacy' might lead to agreement on the basic principles and the guidelines for the work of the Conference, which goes beyond venues and dates. If approval from regional states is forthcoming on these procedural matters, participants might be more disposed later to discuss substantial issues at the Conference table. Therefore, we suggest placing strong emphasis on the establishment of bilateral and multilateral networks of communication and dialogue in advance of the convocation of the MEC itself. Hence, the Facilitator should convince the Arab states, Israel, and Iran to embark in a serious and constructive way on a two-step approach: first by indirect and then by direct talks.

Box No. 3: Countries of Experts Who Also Contributed to This POLICY BRIEF

This POLICY BRIEF benefited from additional responses of several experts coming from a representative range of Middle Eastern countries.



In general, we all consider essential that the Facilitator focus his efforts on ensuring maximal inclusiveness since the more states that take part in the MEC process, the greater the chance that win-win possibilities can be created. Each state involved needs to have a venue to express its concerns and perceptions (as well as its view of other parties' misperceptions) on national and collective security. In any case, agreements will have



to be 'freely arrived at'. Given this emphasis on self-determination, a consensus on major issues seems to be a key to success for the whole endeavor.

One further challenge for the Facilitator is to convince regional states of their common interest in the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone. We share the view that all Middle Eastern countries will indeed find their security better served by the creation of such a zone.

Interpretation of the Facilitator's Mandate and Role

Ambassador Laajava will have to operate within the mandate of the 2010 NPT Final Document, which however does not provide clear guidelines for action. Thus, we all think that he should interpret this mandate in a flexible way in accord with the possibly changing conditions that present themselves during the process. Maximal inclusiveness requires the Facilitator to be a very careful go-between the parties, always with an eye towards creating solutions that take all perspectives into account. Therefore, the Facilitator should engage in discrete and honest diplomacy without siding with any particular party or imposing his own views.

In the preparatory phase he should talk directly to the regional states and highlight the risks involved if the MEC is not convened. Once the process is under way, he needs to combine flexibility with some form of leadership by focusing and clarifying issues, as well as exposing contradictions. Some of us also argue that he should channel discussion towards making suggestions and reaching prescriptions by assisting parties to discover possible areas of agreement rather than by negotiating on their behalf.

In our view, the most important feature of the Facilitator's role should be a provider of good offices, although many of us argue that it should not be limited to that. He should be a strong and independent advisor capable of providing an impetus to negotiations when they are in danger of breaking down. By remaining discrete and impartial, the Facilitator would make sure that all parties place their trust in him. This is one of the main challenges in the MEC's complex multi-party setting. As a result, we recommend that he always seek to maintain some distance from which he can evaluate the overall process.

Format of the Middle East Conference

Since the planned gathering is mandated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, it may seem to require a NPT-related format. However, this institutional setting could lead Israel not to participate because it is the only regional state not party to the NPT. Therefore, most of us agree that the setting should be one that implies urgency but not at the price of alienating any of the parties involved. In fact, the mandate does not rule out convening the MEC in a different setting due both to the Conference's regional character and the inclusion of armaments that extend beyond nuclear weapons. As a result, most of us prefer an institutional setting in a UN-related context. One could also explore the possibility of reviving a format similar to that of the ACRS talks, while bearing in mind the reasons for their failure.

Clearly a regional WMD/DVs Free Zone will not be achieved in a single meeting. Therefore, most of us argue that the Facilitator should not regard the Conference as a one time event but rather a continuous and sustainable process within an agreed-upon timeframe. It is especially important that, in case the talks stagnate, the parties have the possibility to periodically reconvene. Therefore, some of us propose to regularly meet every year or every six months in order to discuss matters related to regional peace and security as well as the status of a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East.

Timing of the Middle East Conference

We are aware that the preparation of a process such as the MEC requires a considerable amount of time. In fact, we advise that the Conference be held at a time when the necessary preparation, both procedural and substantive, has been undertaken. As a consequence, most of us see the late 2012 as the best timing for the Middle East Conference in accord with the mandate.

From our view, it is advisable that the timing of the MEC does not conflict with other important events or meetings on the international disarmament agenda. Political events, like the presidential election in the United States, or continuing regional uncertainties connected with the 'Arab Spring' may also lead to a rescheduling. Since a successful Conference depends upon good preparation, the Finnish

Box No. 4: George F. Kennan Speaks to Ambassador Jaakko Laajava

»» A French writer once wrote, with that marvelous pithiness to which the French language sometimes lends itself: "Dans les choses humaines rarement peut on tout; on peut un peu. C'est toute une vie que de réaliser ce peu." ««

Source: George F. Kennan (1972) *Memoirs: 1950-1963, Volume II*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, p. 324.

Box No. 5: Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East

»» [T]he key task in the creation of a regional WMD/DVs Free Zone is not to eliminate a particular WMD programme of any given state in the region but to devise a comprehensive system of security whereby all states in the region believe that they can give up the option of such weapons without detriment to their security. This will require the development of a security regime within which the states of the region take significant steps to address the pressures which have led to the development of these weapons in the first place. This agenda is much broader than weapons of mass destruction. ««

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2011) *Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East: Issues and Options*, Stockholm: SIPRI, p. 29.

Box No. 6: Bridging the Gap

»» [A] concerted effort must be made to change the perceptions and approaches of Middle East states so that they cease adopting security policies that diminish the security of their neighbors. For this purpose, greater awareness must be developed by the region's states regarding the "security dilemma" – that their neighbors' diminished security rarely translates to gains in their own well-being. ««

Source: Shai Feldman and Abdullah Toukan (1997) *Bridging the Gap: A Future Security Architecture for the Middle East*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 95.

**Box No. 7: Encouragement from the 1991 UN Expert Study**

» There clearly is no instant solution to the problem. There also is no doubt that the goal can be reached; it is not an idle dream. Intensive and sustained efforts can overcome the most serious difficulties, provided that these efforts attract the participation and support of the States of the region and of the major outside Powers. «

Source: Report of the Secretary-General (1991) *Effective and Verifiable Measures Which Would Facilitate the Establishment of a Nuclear-weapon-free Zone in the Middle East*, Department for Disarmament Affairs, New York: United Nations, p. 40.

Box No. 8: United States Secretary of State James A. Baker III

» Despite the political issues that currently divide governments and peoples, there are real ties that bind the peoples of the Middle East together. For after all, they drink the same water, they breathe the same air, are vulnerable to the same diseases, and have all suffered from the very tragic costs of war. [...] We live in an age when many of the world's regions, once ravaged by war, are now coming together. We see this above all here in Europe, but we see it too in Asia and in Central and Latin America. The results are obvious: peace and security, prosperity, better quality of life. Increasingly, the Middle East stands out, but not in the way that should make any of us proud. Our challenge our opportunity is to begin the process of making the Middle East a region, not just in the geographic sense, but in the political, the economic, and, indeed, in the human sense as well. «

Source: Remarks by Secretary of State James A. Baker III before the Organizational Meeting for Multilateral Negotiations on the Middle East, House of Unions, January 28, 1992.

Facilitator and the states involved should avoid convening an ill-prepared gathering just for the sake of having the MEC take place in 2012.

Backup with the Finnish Government

We applaud the appointment of a Finnish Facilitator especially in light of the positive image of Finland throughout the region. It is regarded as a neutral country, a genuine proponent of disarmament, and a state with a positive record in conflict-resolution. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that it is unclear how much influence a Northern European country like Finland can wield over the MEC's participants. Since Finland is not a traditional player in the Middle East, it is untouched by local conflicts and interests. However, cultural differences may present various barriers. Hence, Ambassador Laajava's effectiveness depends on his capacity to understand the needs and interests of all parties. Furthermore, we think that the Finnish government's support for the Facilitator is indispensable to a successful Conference. Having said that, the government needs to avoid the appearance of meddling in the negotiation process so as to preserve the integrity and independence of Ambassador Laajava.

Cooperation with the Co-Sponsors

We acknowledge that the Facilitator is working in close cooperation with all co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, i.e. the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia. Without international support at the highest level, prospects for the success of the Conference would be hampered. At the same time, the Facilitator should not succumb to outside pressure in discharging his duties. Moreover, in the case of a successful establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East, the co-sponsors and the P5 in general have an important role to play in providing negative security assurances (see POLICY BRIEF No. 5 by Roberta Mulas). In general, regional states are fearful that a too close cooperation between Ambassador Laajava and the co-sponsors could unduly determine or direct his facilitation efforts.

Cooperation with International Organizations

The Facilitator will have to draw on the expertise of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for

the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as mandated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference's Final Document. He might further explore the possibility of involving – in preparatory and supporting roles – international bodies like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League of Nations, and the European Union. We also advise him to consult with representatives of verification agencies from other regions, such as the Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the European Atomic Energy Community. When the talks become conflicted, focusing on the technical dimensions of a WMD/DVs Free Zone might possibly ease tensions and contribute to the success of both the Facilitator and the Conference.

In the same vein of inter-regional cooperation, the Facilitator could benefit from discussions with representatives of the already established nuclear weapon free zones (treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba, Bangkok, and Semipalatinsk). Moreover, it might be helpful to examine the merits of already existing confidence-building mechanisms within the region and beyond. Finally, it would be advisable for the Facilitator to cooperate with Ms. Alison Kelly of Ireland, who brokered the 2010 agreement on the Middle East Conference's mandate.

Cooperation with Track II/Civil Society

We all agree that interactions among the Facilitator and various Track II initiatives are highly welcome; some of us even consider them of vital importance for the success of the Facilitator's mission. Indeed, information about Track II proceedings and their respective outcomes can give him a more informal perspective on the positions of regional states and an opportunity to reflect on new and creative ideas. In addition, the Facilitator could build on the trust generated by dialogue on the non-governmental level by engaging universities, think-tanks, and public-opinion leaders. Moreover, Ambassador Laajava and his team should also be invited to Track II events. His participation would allow him to reach to influential circles in ways that go beyond the dialogue with official government representatives. All of us also recognize the importance of an active Track II participation at the Conference itself. We ourselves propose to organize side-events for civil society and Track II initiatives.



As important as it is, Track II is only a part of civil society and it would be also advisable for the Facilitator to learn the divergent and convergent viewpoints that exist in each regional state. Mobilizing regional and international public opinion in support of a WMD/DVs Free Zone could help to ensure that the Conference remains a high priority in national capitals around the world. The deeper this perception grows, the greater the prospects for ultimately establishing a regional WMD/DVs Free Zone. We propose that the Facilitator foster outreach activities which could be performed by the Track II experts, such as public conferences, round table discussions on television, radio, or the Internet including the use of social networks. One could imagine producing educational literature designed for the wider public or involving famous intellectuals and artists for communicating the significance of the Conference and its potential benefits.

We all share the common view that the various tracks complement one another. While the most obvious avenue for a breakthrough is direct cooperation between the Facilitator and regional states, other dimensions should not be underestimated. The various cooperative efforts we described between the Facilitator and the co-sponsors, international organizations and Track II/civil society could create an environment that improves the chances for a successful Middle East Conference. A crossover between the tracks is important as valuable information is learned and shared in all directions. One never knows where a breakthrough might come from.

Concrete Proposals for the Facilitator

We have mentioned a list of challenges and opportunities for Ambassador Laajava and his team. We then briefly outlined the role of a facilitator in the relevant literature such as acting as a communication channel, arranging interaction and reducing tensions, exploring interests, and outlining mutually preferable outcomes. Finally, as experts in the field, we have put forward recommendations for the practical steps to be taken within the MEC process.

We all share the opinion that Ambassador Laajava, an experienced diplomat with insights from the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, is uniquely qualified in providing an environment to make the Middle East Conference happen, successful, and sustainable. We also

consider him to be in a position to initiate a fresh start in the Middle Eastern security discussion. Dear Ambassador Laajava, we therefore respectfully propose the following concrete recommendations:

- Establish a ‘Support Group’ of Middle Eastern experts as part of your staff. This group, possibly appointed in consultation with the Middle Eastern states, would help spearhead the process of developing a better social, political, and cultural understanding of the parties. This ‘Support Group’ of experts could work out an ‘index’ of the positions of each party. Every country has its own expectations and concerns regarding a process of discussing and negotiating a gradual path with the ultimate objective of dismantling all categories of WMD plus their DVs in the Middle East. The ‘Support Group’ could help in

Endnotes

1. All views reported below were expressed under Chatham House rules and the authors participated in their private capacity only.
2. Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1995) ‘Resolution on the Middle East’, NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Annex. Online, available at: http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/1995-NPT/pdf/Resolution_MiddleEast.pdf (December 13, 2011).
3. Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2010) ‘Final Document’, Vol. 1. Online, available at: www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20%28VOL.1%29 (December 13, 2011), p. 30.
4. ‘Finland Appointed as Host Government, Facilitator for 2012 Conference on Middle East as Zone Free of Nuclear, All Mass-Destruction Weapons’, October 14, 2011. Online, available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sg2180.doc.htm> (October 17, 2011).
5. ‘Finland designated to host international conference in 2012 on nuclear weapons-free Middle East’, Helsingin Sanomat, October 17, 2011. Online, available at <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Finland+designated+to+host+international+conference+in+2012+on+nuclear+weapons-free+Middle+East+/1135269684113> (November 11, 2011).
6. Gerald M. Steinberg (1995) ‘Arms Control in the Middle East: Global Regimes vs. Regional Dynamics’, in Efraim Inbar (ed.) *Regional Security Regimes: Israel and Its Neighbors*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 175–197, here p. 179.
7. See on this, Bernd W. Kubbig (2012) ‘Introduction’, in *Ibid* and Sven-Eric Fikenscher (eds): *Arms Control and Missile Proliferation in the Middle East*, London: Routledge, 1–23.
8. On the positive and negative Middle Eastern experiences regarding mediation, see *POLICY BRIEF No. 4* by István Balogh et al.
9. Deiniol Jones (1999) *Cosmopolitan mediation? Conflict resolution and the Oslo Accords*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 17.
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11. Oliver Ramsbotham et al. (2011) *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 3rd edition, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 181.
12. Kyle C. Beardsley et al. (2006) ‘Mediation Style and Crisis Outcomes’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(1): 58–86, here p. 62.
13. Jeffrey Z. Rubin (1992) ‘Conclusion: International Mediation in Context’, in Jacob Bercovitch and *Ibid*. (eds) *Mediation in International Relations*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 249–271, here p. 267.
14. Declaration of Principles and Statements of Intent on Arms Control and Regional Security, quoted in Dalia Dassa Kaye (2001) *Beyond the Handshake: Multilateral Cooperation in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process, 1991–1996*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 206–209.

Further Reading

- *Report of the Secretary-General (1991) Effective and Verifiable Measures Which Would Facilitate the Establishment of a Nuclear-weapon-free Zone in the Middle East, Department for Disarmament Affairs, New York: United Nations.*
- *Michael Hamel-Green (2005) Regional Initiatives on Nuclear- and WMD-Free Zones: Cooperative Approaches to Arms Control and Non-proliferation, Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).*
- *Bernd W. Kubbig and Sven-Eric Fikenscher (eds) (2012) Arms Control and Missile Proliferation in the Middle East, London: Routledge.*
- *Chen Kane (2011) 'The role of civil society in promoting a WMD-free zone in the Middle East', Disarmament Forum, No. 2: 51–62.*

formulating these perceptions and specific concerns allowing your efforts to focus on discovering common ground between confronting regional players. Furthermore, for direct communication with the regional countries, you and the 'Support Group' should reflect in writing your vision for the procedural and substantive issues to be addressed in the Conference process.

- Outline and draft a guideline and statement of intent for the whole Middle East Conference process. They could build on the "Declaration of Principles and Statements of Intent on Arms Control and Regional Security"¹⁴ which was developed by Middle Eastern states in the course of the ACRS talks in the 1990s.
- Organize and convene sub-regional 'mini conferences' during the lead-up to the MEC in order to agree on the procedural issues and the agenda. These would be helpful first steps in building trust in multilateral settings during the lead-up to the Middle East Conference. We suggest concentrating on two sub-regions: the Near East (including Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian authorities, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) and the Gulf (comprising Saudi

Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen). It might be advisable that some states participate in both of those conferences due to their stakes in local conflicts and their regional influence.

Our Final Encouragement as Track II Experts

Dear Ambassador Laajava, we strongly support your appointment! Due to the neutrality of your country and your personal optimism and accomplishments on the way towards peace, we have high expectations for you and believe that you are the right person for this difficult task. We explicitly encourage you to take an active and impartial role during the process that we hope will lead to the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East. We encourage you to remain determined when lack of progress or impediments stand before you and the fulfillment of your important, indeed historic, mission. We would like to conclude with a thought expressed by one of us which we all share: "please understand the status quo and its related problems, but please highlight the fact that we all want a safer Middle East." ■

About the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST (APOME)

The ORCHESTRA is the follow-up project of the "Multilateral Study Group (MSG) on the Establishment of a Missile Free Zone in the Middle East". The ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST is a classical Track II initiative: It consists of some 70 experts – mainly from the Middle East/Gulf, one of the most conflict-ridden areas of the world. The ORCHESTRA is meeting regularly in working groups (CHAMBER ORCHESTRA UNITS) on specific topics in the context of a workshop cycle from 2011-2014. The main goal of this initiative is to shape the 2012 Middle East Conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles agreed upon by the international community in May 2010.

For this reason, these experts develop ideas, concepts, and background information in a series of POLICY BRIEFS which are the results of intense discussions within the CHAMBER ORCHESTRA UNITS. In this framework, the broader normative Cooperative Security Concept will be further developed, embedded, and institutionalized in the region. At the same time, the ORCHESTRA meetings serve as venues for confidence-building among the experts. The networking activities of PRIF's Project Group are documented by the ATLAS on Track II research activities in or about the Middle East/Gulf region.

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