

# Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East

*Safeguards are seen as complementing and enhancing efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region*

by M. ElBaradei

For more than a decade it has been the consensus view of Member States of the United Nations that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East would greatly enhance international peace and security. Successive resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly have called upon all parties directly concerned to:

- consider taking the practical and urgent steps required to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and
- pending the establishment of such a zone, to place all their nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards.

Parallel with the United Nations's efforts — and in cognizance of the important role of verification in the establishment of such a zone — the IAEA General Conference also has expressed on more than one occasion the view that the application of safeguards to all nuclear facilities in the Middle East would complement and enhance efforts to establish the zone.

In 1988, the IAEA General Conference specifically requested the Director General, *inter alia*, to prepare a technical study on different modalities of application of IAEA safeguards in the region, taking into account the Agency's experience in applying its safeguards.\*

In response to that request, the Director General in 1989 prepared a Technical Study on Different Modalities of the Application of Safeguards in the Middle East.\*\* The study analysed the current status of nuclear activities and safeguards in the Middle East, described the IAEA's experience in applying safeguards under different types of safeguards agreements, and identified a number of modalities that could be used to enhance the application of safeguards in the Middle East.

These included:

- adherence by all States in the region to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and conclusion of the relevant safeguards agreements;
- conclusion of full-scope safeguards agreements with the Agency;
- application of INFCIRC/66/Rev.2-type agreements to all nuclear installations in the States; and/or,
- establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and the conclusion of associated safeguards agreements.

In 1989, the General Conference requested the Director General to consult with the States concerned in the Middle East with a view to applying Agency safeguards to all nuclear installations in the area, keeping in mind the relevant recommendations in the technical study and the situation in the area.\*\*\*

In the course of the consultations, which took the Director General to a number of States in the Middle East, it became clear that there was general agreement among States of the region on the desirability of applying IAEA safeguards to all nuclear facilities in the Middle East.

Opinions differed, however, as to whether this should precede or follow the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and whether this could precede or follow a comprehensive peace in the region. A special emphasis was placed by many States on the need to develop a special and more comprehensive safeguards approach tailored to the special needs of the Middle East. A number of the States emphasized the importance of a system of mutual inspection by the parties, in addition to verification by the IAEA, as a necessary confidence building measure.

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\* IAEA document GC (XXXII)/RES/487 (1988).

\*\* IAEA document GC (XXXIII)/887 (1989).

\*\*\* IAEA document GC (XXXIII)/RES/506 (1989).

In 1990, in taking note of the Director General's report on the results of his consultations, the IAEA General Conference requested the Director General to continue his consultations with States of the region. \*

### Effects of recent developments

Since then, the Gulf war and its consequences have had an impact on these consultations. By resolution 687 and subsequent others in 1991, the Security Council imposed a series of measures on Iraq aimed, *inter alia*, at undoing Iraq's nuclear-weapons development. Certain important tasks were entrusted to the IAEA in that regard: on-site inspections to ascertain Iraq's nuclear capabilities; the destruction, removal, or rendering harmless of Iraq's nuclear weapons, nuclear weapons-usable material and associated items; and on-going monitoring and verification to ensure future compliance.

The measures adopted by the Security Council in the nuclear field, and similar measures relevant to chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles, were regarded by the Security Council as steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

The events in Iraq — and the experience gained by the IAEA as a result — have demonstrated in a dramatic way the urgent need to address non-proliferation issues in the Middle East in a comprehensive and fresh manner. They have also confirmed the notion that an intrusive safeguards system is essential to establish the required confidence in the Middle East, an area beset by a long history of wars and distrust.

In his report to the IAEA General Conference in September 1991, the Director General expressed this view, stating that in all likelihood verification features that transcend what the IAEA is now doing under NPT agreements and similar comprehensive safeguards agreements would be required in the Middle East.

Among these features, by way of illustration, are the application of safeguards not merely to nuclear material, but also to nuclear equipment and installations and relevant non-nuclear material, such as heavy water; and a system of special inspections with access available to any site, either upon the initiative of the Agency, or upon the request of any State or States in the region.

The Director General has also expressed the view that mutual confidence can equally be

created with the active co-operation between States of the region. This could include, as is the case in Europe, joint nuclear research and development programmes, including perhaps regional fuel cycle centres.

The Director General's report also called attention to the fact, that as all armed attacks on nuclear installations have occurred in the Middle East, it would be important to have a binding commitment against such attacks in a future arms control agreement in the region.

In September 1991, the IAEA General Conference adopted a resolution that affirmed the urgent need for all States in the Middle East "to forthwith accept the application of full-scope safeguards as an important confidence building measure... and as a step in enhancing peace and security in the context of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone".\*\*

It also requested the Director General to take such measures as are necessary to facilitate the early application of full-scope IAEA safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East, and in particular to prepare a model agreement taking into account the views of the States in the region, as a necessary step towards the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

All the States in the region were called upon to extend their fullest co-operation to the Director General and to take measures aimed at establishing such a zone in the region. All other States, especially those with a special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, were called upon to render assistance to the Director General to facilitate the implementation of the resolution.

### A sense of urgency

The convening of the Middle East Peace Conference — and the agreement of the participants in the conference to include on its agenda the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons — lend a sense of urgency to the IAEA's efforts in preparing the technical groundwork relevant to verification of commitments under a zone agreement.

It is to be hoped that the parties will find it possible to agree in the near future on the establishment of such a zone, and that the IAEA will be able to contribute to the development and implementation of the agreement, thus significantly advancing the cause of peace and non-proliferation.

\*IAEA document GC (XXXIV)/RES/526 (1990).

\*\*IAEA document GC (XXXV)/RES/571 (1991).