

## FACT SHEET

### NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONES

**“First and foremost, nuclear-weapon-free zones put a permanent end to the possibility of nuclear conflict in a given region... At the same time, these zones can provide additional assurance to the global community of the peaceful nuclear intentions of the countries in these regions.”**

*Secretary General’s remarks at the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, 18 November 2019*

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZ) are an important regional approach to strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidating international efforts towards peace and security.

The treaties establishing NWFZs ban nuclear weapons within the respective territories of the zones, including the acquisition, possession, placement, testing and use of such weapons.

**The following treaties govern the 5 existing NWFZ:**

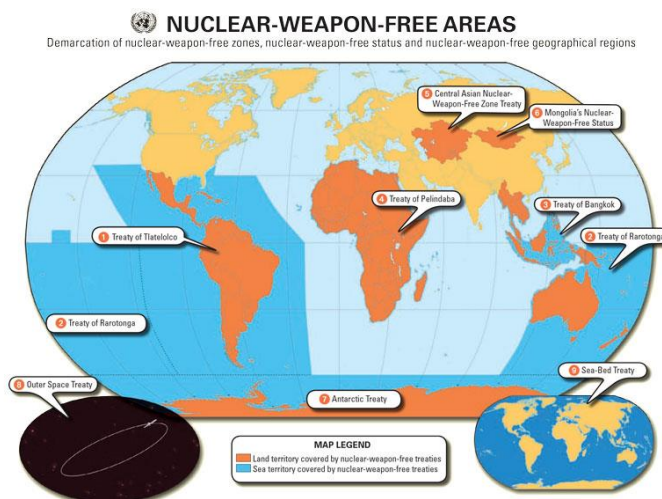
**Treaty of Tlatelolco** Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (1967)

**Treaty of Rarotonga** South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (1985)

**Treaty of Bangkok** Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (1995)

**Treaty of Pelindaba** African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (1996)

**Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia** (2006)



**In 1992, Mongolia declared its nuclear-weapon-free status**, which has been recognized internationally through UN General Assembly resolution 55/33S on "Mongolia's international security and nuclear weapon free status" (adopted on 20 November 2000).

**Other treaties that deal with the denuclearization of geographical regions are:**

**Antarctic Treaty** (1959)

**Outer Space Treaty** Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (1967)

**Moon Agreement** Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (1979)

**Seabed Treaty** Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil thereof (1971)

**Establishment of NWFZ**

**Article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) states:** “Nothing in this Treaty affects the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties in order to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories.”

## **General Assembly resolution 3472 B (1975) defined a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone as:**

“...any zone recognized as such by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which any group of States, in the free exercises of their sovereignty, has established by virtue of a treaty or convention whereby:

- (a) The statute of total absence of nuclear weapons, to which the zone shall be subject, including the procedure for the delimitation of the zone, is defined;
- (b) An international system of verification and control is established to guarantee compliance with the obligations deriving from that statute.”

## **The UN Disarmament Commission in its report of 30 April 1999, recommended a set of principles and guidelines for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, including:**

- Nuclear-weapon-free zones should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned.
- The initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone should emanate exclusively from States within the region concerned and be pursued by all States of that region.
- The nuclear-weapon States should be consulted during the negotiations of each treaty and its relevant protocol(s) establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in order to facilitate their signature to and ratification of the relevant protocol(s) to the treaty, through which they undertake legally binding commitments to the status of the zone and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States parties to the treaty.
- A nuclear-weapon-free zone should not prevent the use of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes and could also promote, if provided for in the treaties establishing such zones, bilateral, regional and international cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the zone, in support of socio-economic, scientific and technological development of the States parties.

The above five regional NWFZ in populated areas around the world are in effect. Some of the treaties related to these zones are at different stages with regard to the signature, ratification and entry into force. Each NWFZ treaty contains associated protocols seeking security assurances from the five nuclear-weapon States that they will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against NWFZ member States. Signature and ratification of these protocols by the nuclear-weapon States are also at varying stages of completion.

There is currently renewed interest in the establishment of new NWFZ, particularly efforts aimed at initiating a process to do so in the Middle East.

## **Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament**

In his Agenda for Disarmament, *Securing Our Common Future*, the Secretary-General has pledged to work with Member States to strengthen and consolidate nuclear-weapon-free zones, including by facilitating enhanced cooperation and consultation between existing zones, encouraging nuclear-weapon States to adhere to the relevant protocols to the treaties establishing such zones, and supporting the further establishment of such zones, including in the Middle East (*Agenda Action 5*).

### **Cooperation between existing NWFZs**

Formal cooperation between existing NWFZs is currently limited to the Conferences of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia that are held in New York every five years (since 2005) in the lead up to the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia was scheduled to take place on 24 April 2020, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations General Assembly decided to postpone the Conference to a later date.<sup>1</sup>

On 28-29 August 2019, UNODA co-organized with Kazakhstan a seminar for representatives from all existing NWFZs and Mongolia as part of the preparatory process for the Fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia. The Republic of Kazakhstan, as the host of the seminar, produced a summary containing a set of [recommendations](#) aimed at revitalizing and systematizing cooperation between the zones in alignment with Action 5 of the [Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament](#).

For the same purpose, UNODA launched in February 2021 a global nuclear-weapon-free zone [website/portal](#) as a means of communication among the zones and to provide updates on nuclear weapon-free zone related events and other joint activities.

**For more information please visit:** <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/nwzf/> or <https://www.un.org/nwzf/>

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly decision 75/575 of 29 July 2021 (see page 323 of [Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the General Assembly during its seventy-fifth session](#)).