

## **Towards a more secure and WMD-free Middle East**

*All-Party Parliamentary Groups on the UN and Global Security and Non-proliferation*

### Report on Progress for the 2012 Conference from Ambassador Jaakko Laajava

#### **His feelings towards the 2012 Middle East Conference:**

- Things won't change overnight but we can start putting in the groundwork
- His task is realistically very difficult, but a lot has been achieved in the past 8 months

#### **Mood of consultations on the 2012 Middle East Conference so far:**

- Animosity and tensions remain between the states but positive response overall
- He has been well received and the spirit of talks has been consistently constructive
- He is happy that meetings have been held at the appropriate level

#### **Prerequisites for a successful conference:**

- Boundaries of ME defined to establish the circle of participation for the conference
- Appropriate political conditions in place (achieved through consensus building)

#### **His suggested sequence of events for the 2012 conference:**

- Start with a limited couple of days working on something small
- Then step up to the very complex issues (e.g. chemical and biological weapons)
- Afterwards much following up must be done to assess success of various measures

#### **Timing of the 2012 conference in Helsinki:**

- Arrangements for the conference are not yet fully in place and no date has been set
- The government of Finland has said that it can be arranged for any time in 2012
- December has been mentioned many times in consultations (but he can't speculate)

#### **The end result we should be seeking from the conference:**

- Feels that this discussion is long overdue
- The cornerstone is to achieve a WMD free zone, but we still have a long way to go
- Rather, we are talking about a *process*
- It needs to be established, put in place and begun; this is what we are doing

### Analysis of Issues Surrounding the 2012 Conference by Mark Fitzpatrick, IISS

- Raising ambitions higher than realistically achievable could render it a failure, while merely aiming to get people there is not ambitious enough; we must strike a balance.
- Hostility in the region makes it harder to establish a nuclear weapon free zone.
- Egypt and Israel are key players and must be present at the conference.
- Work put into this conference should be aimed at a process, not a one off event. One outcome of the conference could be the establishment of a working group to address some of the barriers to a MEWMDFW zone, such as transparency and verification.
- Past consensus should be built on; states in the region have already signed treaties and resolutions on this subject, so reinforcing these commitments is a good starting point. Of the 9 interim steps outlined in his recent briefing report<sup>1</sup>, he notes that the latter (signing and ratifying the CTBT, p.16) is therefore the most important.

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<sup>1</sup> Towards a more secure and WMD-free Middle East, Briefing Report written for UNA-UK