

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Zurich, 5 July 2018

Round Table in Zurich to promote a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East:

### **Draft treaty for a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East welcomed**

**At the invitation of Green Cross Switzerland, a round table was held in Zurich from 2 to 4 July 2018 regarding a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East. Approximately 40 delegates from the Middle East, Australia, Canada, France, Great Britain, Russia, Sweden, USA and Switzerland discussed the course of action to promote a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East. According to Stephan Robinson, Unit Manager (Water, Legacy), Green Cross Switzerland, and Sharon Dolev, Head of the Israeli Disarmament Movement (IDM), the outcome of the closed meeting has paved the way to introduce initial steps towards a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East.**

The treaty represents the civil society and was developed by the efforts of the coalition of non-government organizations, particularly Green Cross and the Israeli Disarmament Movement IDM. The purpose is to set up a treaty to make the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction, which all states involved are able to fulfil.

The Middle East is neither an island nor is it cut off from the rest of the world. There are two nations with nuclear weapons bordering the Middle East: Pakistan with its own programme and Turkey with the nuclear weapons from the USA. The Middle Eastern states are investing in nuclear energy and maintain trade relations with external supplier countries. States armed with nuclear weapons are active in the area and their warships are crisscrossing the region. Some of these ships may be equipped with nuclear weapons. The treaty contains protocols binding these nations to the treaty, similar to the protocols regarding other zones free from nuclear weapons. This is an important step along the way to the elimination of nuclear weapons around the world.

At the General Assembly of the United Nations on 11 December 1975 zones free from nuclear weapons were considered to be the most effective means to achieve a world without nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. At the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in May 2010 the Arab states requested a conference to address and discuss a weapons of mass destruction free zone (WMFZ) in the Middle East.

The first round table to discuss the weapons of mass destruction free zone was held as early as 2013 in Tel Aviv, followed by a second focusing on chemical warfare. During in-depth discussions with Israeli experts regarding security, disarmament and other related problems, two primary obstacles were identified to the establishment of the weapons of mass destruction free zone. On the one hand, there was no model available in writing based on which an agreement to the treaty could be reached. On the other hand, Israel lacked a public dialog regarding the efforts of disarmament. Recent official statements and talks indicate that Israel would favour the discussion of a broader spectrum of regional security issues and maintains a direct dialog with its neighbours to accomplish this. The Arab states, led by Egypt, have already expressed their preference for an internationally overseen process.

An NGO coalition was established in 2010 at the initiative of Green Cross Switzerland and Global Green USA. Its goal is the implementation and expansion of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The 86 members of the NGO coalition are committed to have every nation join the Chemical Weapons Convention to achieve universality. Some of the remaining states with chemical weapons will disarm their weapon systems only if the other states denuclearize to the same extent. Therefore, the NGO coalition is seeking a solution for the promotion of weapons of mass destruction free zones.

Green Cross Switzerland is engaged in the worldwide phase-out of nuclear power and is actively involved with the effects of the military use of nuclear materials on environment and health. With its international programmes "Social and Medical Care" and "Legacy of the Cold War" Green Cross Switzerland is committed to overcoming the consequences of industrial and military disasters and the contamination from the Cold War era. The goals of the ZEWO-certified environmental organisation are supported by the Green Cross parliamentary group.

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