



African Commission on Nuclear Energy

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Statement by
The African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE)
on behalf of the African Union Commission & African State Parties to the NPT

10th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

General Debate

New York, 4 August 2022

Mr. President,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE), and African State Parties to the African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty (The Pelindaba Treaty). Mr. President, we congratulate you for your presidency of this 10th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and we assure you of our full cooperation and support.
2. AFCONE is the Secretariat of the Pelindaba Treaty, whose mission is to contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security through ensuring the commitment of African States to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. AFCONE also contributes to the social well-being of African States, through the promotion of safe and secure peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
3. AFCONE is pleased that notwithstanding the fact that this 10th NPT review conference had been postponed since 2020 due to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has finally been organized; and is indeed very timely in terms of providing the appropriate forum for addressing urgent prevailing matters related to the NPT.
4. The African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, together with the other four (4) Nuclear Weapons Free Zones, and the National Nuclear Weapons Free Zone of Mongolia, comprises 114 states and almost 40% of the world's population.
5. These NWFZs include the zones created by the Treaty of Pelindaba (in Africa), the Treaty of Tlatelolco (in Latin America and the Caribbean), the Treaty of Rarotonga (in the South Pacific), the Treaty of Bangkok (in South East Asia), and the Treaty of Semipalatinsk (in Central Asia) and cover most of the Southern Hemisphere.
6. These internationally recognized Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute towards a world free of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the 2010 NPT Review Conference, reaffirmed the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones contributes towards realizing this important goal.
7. AFCONE commends the Nuclear Weapons Free Zones for fostering progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons, inter alia, through reducing the geographical footprint of nuclear weapons. **We hope that other regions that do not yet have Nuclear Weapons Free Zones will work diligently and urgently towards creating such zones; to further diminish the geographical footprint of nuclear weapons and by extension the promotion of international peace and security.**
8. AFCONE also notes the contribution of the five NPT nuclear-weapons States (the United States, the Russian Federation, China, the United Kingdom, and France), to non-proliferation through their ongoing engagements with the current Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaties. **In this regard, we encourage the Nuclear Weapon States to prioritize efforts towards ratification of all the applicable protocols of all the NWFZ Treaties.**

9. With regard to the African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Pelindaba), AFCONE is seeking to engage as soon as possible, in constructive dialogue with the Nuclear Weapon States and Spain on the complete ratification and adherence to the Protocols of the Pelindaba Treaty, without reservations.
10. AFCONE believes that greater cooperation, collaboration, and coordination among the NWFZs would further strengthen the non-proliferation regime and accelerate progress towards achieving the goals of the NPT. We are convinced that by working closely together, the impact of the NWFZs would be significantly greater than the cumulative outcome of the different NWFZs working in isolation.
11. In this regard, AFCONE is currently engaging with OPANAL (The Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) and the Central Asian NWFZ, through Memoranda of Understanding, to enhance cooperation and coordination. We plan to establish, as soon as possible, similar cooperation and collaboration relationships with the other NWFZs.
12. AFCONE recalls that during the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT, a resolution was adopted, calling for “the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems”. During subsequent NPT Review Conferences, the importance of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East has been reaffirmed and stressed that the resolution remains valid until its goals and objectives are achieved. **Since our establishment in 2009, AFCONE has been supporting efforts to establish a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East.**
13. Recognizing the key and important role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in advancing nuclear non-proliferation around the world, **AFCONE also supports the IAEA’s General Conference resolutions related to the establishment of a mutually and effectively verifiable NWFZ in the Middle East.**

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14. AFCONE would like to commend the contribution of the safeguards system of the IAEA in furthering the non-proliferation provisions of the NPT Articles I, II and III.1. AFCONE also notes that the Technical Cooperation Programme of the IAEA is an important vehicle for driving the implementation of NPT Article IV. **AFCONE hopes to enhance its cooperation with the IAEA, with the objective of achieving appropriate and sustainable progress in Africa, in the areas of safeguards, nuclear security, nuclear safety, and the peaceful applications of nuclear energy.**
15. AFCONE would also like to commend the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) for its efforts to detect signs of nuclear explosions around the world, through its International Monitoring System, that includes 38 monitoring facilities in 24 African countries. AFCONE is looking to strength cooperation and collaboration with the CTBTO on matters of common interest and overlapping responsibilities, as well as on cooperation with African States. AFCONE encourages States, particularly Annex II States, to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty towards the entry into force of the Treaty.
16. AFCONE acknowledges the initiatives of the Zangger Committee, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), with regard to the interpretation of NPT Article III.2.

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17. Additionally, AFCONE would like to take this opportunity to note that since the previous NPT review conference in 2015, African States have made significant progress with regard to additional adherence to the Pelindaba Treaty, ratifications of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), conclusions of safeguards agreements with the IAEA, and adoptions of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (CPPNM) and its amendment. It is also worth celebrating the significance of the entry into force in January 2021, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). 15 African States have signed the TPNW, with 14 having ratified the Treaty.

18. In conclusion, AFCONE would like to indicate our readiness to engage in multilateral cooperative and collaborative arrangements to advance the three pillars of the NPT (i.e. disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy), in Africa, and by extension throughout the rest of the world.
19. AFCONE holds the position that, through inclusive multilateral cooperation and negotiations among States, the world has the best chance of achieving the goals of disarmament, non-proliferation and the benefits of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy for all, as stipulated in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is only through this that we can truly enjoy the benefits of international peace and security.

Thank you, Mr. President

