

**Question for written answer E-011088/2012  
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**

Rule 117

**Pino Arlacchi (S&D), Tarja Cronberg (Verts/ALE) and Ivo Vajgl (ALDE)**

Subject: VP/HR - a Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction

In the months ahead an important UN Conference on making the Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is due to be held in Finland. The conference has been promoted by many states, including the US, Russia and the UK.

The establishment of a Middle East WMD-free zone could offer compelling strategic benefits to the region and to the world at large. It would resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis, thereby removing the stimulus for a proliferation spurt that could see three or four more Middle Eastern countries joining the nuclear club. It would strengthen the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and other non-proliferation regimes by reducing the number of states in possession of WMD. Finally, it would eliminate the most dangerous weapons from the world's most volatile region and reduce the risk that these weapons might be used in war or by accident.

The participation of all stakeholders is critical to the Conference's success. The facilitator and the sponsors have not been able to achieve the participation of all the countries in the region, as Israel has declined to attend.

Israel, though, has much to gain from a verifiably WMD-free zone. A region without WMD is preferable to one that has multiple nuclear weapon states, especially if Israel maintains its decisive advantage in conventional weaponry.

What practical steps are the EEAS and the High Representative willing to take to ensure that the EU plays an active official role in supporting the start of negotiations on a Middle East WMD-free zone?

What concrete steps are being taken by the EU to urge Israel, Iran, Egypt and the other Middle Eastern countries to participate in the Conference and to put pressure on the key players in order to avoid any further delay in the organization of this Conference?