

Moscow Calls for Nuclear-Free Middle East

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MOSCOW - Russia has proposed arranging a conference on ways to secure a nuclear-free Middle East, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told journalists in Moscow on Tuesday.

"We also suggest appointing a special representative who would hold consultations with all countries in the Middle East region. We propose calling a special conference to discuss the possibility of creating a zone free from weapons of mass destruction," Lavrov said.

Moscow has "a whole range of other ideas, including an initiative that all countries of the region should assume obligations to honor various non-proliferation regimes that already exist in the world but have not yet become universal," the Russian minister said.

Russia also hopes that the participants in the New York-based Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference will support the Middle East's nuclear-free status, he said.

"We are convinced that relevant and detailed discussions based on this proposal, which we will circulate at the review conference, as well as an agreement on practical steps towards the goal of forming a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, should become an important result of the review conference," Lavrov said.

Our editorial staff can be reached at eng.editors@interfax.ru

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