

UNSC Resolutions on Iran and North Korea as 1540 Stepping Stones

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Abstract

UN Security Council Resolution 1540 is an ambitious and far-reaching initiative which is able to draw on a variety of national, regional, and multilateral efforts in order to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Two such efforts are the sets of Security Council resolutions addressing the proliferation challenges posed by Iran and North Korea. The proliferation controls that those sets of resolutions require are not only similar to each other, they are also consistent with several of the national implementation requirements of 1540.

More importantly, the sanctions obligations provide concrete examples, as well as greater definition and specificity to those 1540 requirements. This synergy between the sanctions resolutions and 1540 provides an opportunity for states implementing their 1540 obligations to draw upon a series of UN-mandated “best practices” for preventing the spread of WMD as they apply to internationally-recognized proliferation concerns. By employing such proliferation controls against specific proliferators, states can gain both legislative and enforcement experience implementing these types of measures which can then applied broadly as part of a more developed national nonproliferation system. Although the UN sanctions on Iran and North Korea are international mandates, the aim of using their specific proliferation controls as 1540 stepping stones is not intended to inform 1540 implementation for countries which still face serious capacity-building challenges. Rather, it is a way for states which have already established baseline measures implementing 1540 to move to the “appropriate effective” controls envisioned in the resolution.