Mr. President,

The region of the Middle East is undergoing significant and historic changes. The current turmoil in the Arab world is a clear demonstration of the fragility and instability of the region. At the same time, the positive implications of the democratization process in some Middle East countries may offer an opportunity for better atmosphere and dialogue, which could in turn be conducive to the building of trust and confidence among the regional parties.

Several alarming proliferation developments occurred in the Middle East in recent years, mainly by countries that violate their obligations and commitments towards the NPT and the international law.

Among these is the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime against its own civilians. It should be noted that it is the same Syria that previously stated, in its report submitted in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1540, that it does not possess chemical weapons. Syria is also under IAEA investigation due to its clandestine pursuit of nuclear weapons. This practice of deceit by Syria reflects the challenge of enforcement and compliance by states in this region with their arms control obligations and commitments.

Perhaps more alarming is the continued progress of Iran's nuclear program. The ever-expanding capacity of uranium enrichment; the construction of a heavy water research reactor designed for military production of plutonium; and multiple activities related to the design and testing of nuclear weapons components, all testify that Iran is determined in its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. An Iran with military nuclear capabilities would threaten
Mr. President,

Israel's approach and policy in the field of regional security and arms control has always been pragmatic and realistic. It is rooted in its belief that all security concerns of regional members should be taken into account and be realistically addressed within the regional context.

Israel's vision on the "Long-term goals for the regional security and arms control process in the Middle East" underlines lasting peaceful relations, reconciliation, good neighborliness, open borders and trust among the regional parties, as key milestones in the route to a joint regional endeavor that could result in the creation of a mutually verifiable zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. This vision is anchored in a decision of the Government of Israel of November 4th, 1992.

The international experience has proven that such a zone can only emanate from within a region, through direct negotiations. The Middle East region is no exception.

The disturbing realities in the Middle East mandate a practical step-by-step approach, bearing in mind the goal of achieving peaceful relations and reconciliation among all the States in the region. This process is inherently an incremental one. It can only begin with modest arrangements for confidence and security building measures in order to build necessary trust for more ambitious cooperative security undertakings.
Mr. President,

Regrettably, at present, no direct regional security dialogue exists in the Middle East, nor is there a forum to develop confidence-building measures and defuse tensions. The Middle East countries have no regional forum in which all can directly communicate with each other and have a dialogue on core issues that affect their security.

Israel on its part has responded positively to numerous initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and confidence-building through direct, multilateral consultations. These include Israel's participation in the IAEA Forum in November 2011 and the EU Seminars on confidence-building measures in July 2011 and November 2012. Israel has also conducted several meetings with the Under Secretary of State of Finland, Amb. Jaako Laajava to discuss issues related to regional security, participated in multilateral consultations in Vienna in August 2013, and has replied positively to the proposal to conduct direct consultations between regional parties in Geneva, based on the principle of consensus. Today, at this time, authorized representatives of Israel are taking part in another meeting organized by Ambassador Laajava in Glion, Switzerland. We do hope that our Arab neighbors will support a direct dialogue with Israel, based on consensus between all the parties involved, instead of their insistence to submit one-sided resolutions that distance the prospects for better security environment in the Middle East region.

I thank you, Mr. President.