Mr. Chairperson,

Israel has joined once again the consensus on resolution L.1 entitled "Establishment of a NWFZ in the region of the Middle East," despite Israel's remaining substantive reservations regarding the modalities outlined in the resolution. This position is taken as an indication of Israel's continued commitment to a process aimed at the establishment of a more secure, peaceful Middle East, free from conflicts, wars and all weapons of mass destruction. It is also in line with Israel's participation at a senior and authoritative level in five rounds of consultations under Finnish Under-Secretary Laajava. Israel has also stated its willingness to participate in a sixth consultation round. The Arab response regarding participating in this meeting is, unfortunately, still pending.

Mr. Chairperson,

L.1 is a consensual resolution. We would like to remind this body that in the past, in order to facilitate consensus, the draft resolution was shared by its authors with Israel prior to its submission to the committee. Israel has hoped that this positive tradition would have been continued. Unfortunately this was not the case.

Mr. Chairperson,

The text of resolution L.1 recognizes the importance of credible, and I emphasize credible, regional security process as an imperative in the attainment of a Middle East free of all WMD and means of delivery. In this, we are in full agreement. A
credible regional security process is necessary in order to take into account the security concerns of all regional states, and to address them within the context of present regional realities and challenges. It is a *sine qua non* in the establishment of confidence, mutual understanding and cooperation between regional partners. Seen from a pragmatic and realistic perspective, only once such measures are in place, have taken root and have shown to be durable and conducive, can more ambitious undertakings be considered.

A credible process is also closely connected to the widely agreed principle that the establishment of any NWFZ, or WMDFZ as is in the case of the Middle East, must be based on arrangements freely arrived at. This requires that regional states have to fully commit themselves to open and direct communication channels, to genuine engagement and the acknowledgement of the threats and challenges facing other regional partners. They have to recognize all regional states' right to exist and the need to build a spirit of conciliation rather than of confrontation. In the final analysis, this is an incremental process, where one building block must be placed on top of the other, in a stable and sustainable manner.

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, the Middle East is sorely lacking in mechanisms that could foster dialogue and enhance greater understanding between regional players. Currently, there are no processes in the region that could contribute to the building of confidence, de-escalation of tensions and conflict resolution as a whole. There is no forum in which direct communication between regional states can address core security issues and encourage the attainment of solutions in a cooperative and forthcoming manner. It is a harsh reality given the instability and turmoil in the region as well as the tension within and amongst states. Israel believes that only
through direct discussions between regional partners, based on consensus, can progress be achieved and the vision of the Middle East free of war, conflicts and all WMD can be attained.

I thank you.