

ISRAEL

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Statement by:

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on the assumption of chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident in your ability to guide us through the deliberations. As the world faces change and the international community seeks better ways to improve the security of mankind through future arms control, your task is certainly not an easy one, yet it is very challenging. Mr. Chairman, let me assure you of my delegation's full support during the weeks ahead under your guidance.

Mr. Chairman,

During the past year we have witnessed some promising developments that we hope will contribute to security, peace and international stability. At the same time, the international community has also had a sobering experience, as it has become more aware of the growing threats that undermine the prospects for a safer world.

The menace posed by Saddam Hussein to the peoples of the region and to international stability has been removed. At the same time, the continued proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery, and actions by some states that violate their international commitments, have evolved from being a topic of discussion in closed intelligence and policy circles to a problem widely recognized by governments and peoples. This reality, together with the fear of terrorism directed at the civilian population – by means of MANPADS, for example – and in particular the possibility that terrorists will start using nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, presents innocent civilians all over the world with a more concrete threat this year.

The increased attention of the international community to the threats presented by rogue states and terrorist organizations inspires hope that at this juncture we are on the verge of conceptual change, and that next year will see more focused and practical actions to overcome the very real threats to security and stability.

Unfortunately, a large part of this reality is playing itself out in the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman,

The continued proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles, together with the reluctance of certain states to comply with their international commitments, does grave harm to the credibility of disarmament and arms control efforts and to their ability to promote security and stability in the Middle East.

We believe the time has come to admit that not all states have equally noble intentions when they commit themselves to arms control treaties. It is not always possible to count on their genuine cooperation. Regrettably, some join those arrangements only in order to obtain technology for military purposes under false pretexts.

In our attempt to promote conventions and multilateral agreements in the field of disarmament and arms control, we must not forget that they are not, in themselves, the goal, but merely one of the means to an end - the achievement of peace, security, stability and trust among nations. We should also be realistic in our assessments and not deny the limited ability of arms control mechanisms to effectively address security challenges. These challenges emanate from certain regional conditions, and thus require regional solutions.

Israel is a committed and active partner in the effort to promote global peace and security through arms control and disarmament and proliferation prevention. This year is particularly noteworthy in this regard, as Israel took upon itself for the first time the rotating presidency of the Committee on Disarmament, and served as the Deputy Chairman of the working group preparing the SSOD4. In addition, Israel was active in other groups such as the Group of Governmental Experts of the UN Register, and other international fora that seek to promote security and stability. Israel is looking forward to expanding its involvement in the international quest for a way to effectively curb proliferation.

Mr. Chairman,

The reality of the Middle East is unique. Israel must face countries and organizations with declared intentions to destroy her, enemies that are constantly acting to terrorize and harm Israel's civilian population, and neighbors that have never given up their ambitions to develop their WMD capabilities, either clandestinely or openly. When there are attempts to undermine, weaken and limit Israel's ability to defend itself, and there is no process of building confidence, peace, reconciliation and hope, the unavoidable result is less security and less stability. In this reality, the options of unilateral transparency, unilateral disarmament, and unilateral arms limitations cannot contribute to peace, security and stability, and may actually lead to escalation of the conflict.

If there is to be any chance of common security, arms control and disarmament in the Middle East, all of the peoples in the region must come to terms with the existence of the State of Israel, establish a stable relationship of peace and conciliation and cease their political and military attempts to threaten its existence. The next step would then be to embark on a joint process for regional security building.

Concurrently, it is important to act with courage and determination with regards to the trend toward proliferation among the states in the region, their reluctance to comply with their arms control commitments, and their tendency to shelter and support terrorist organizations.

For its part, Israel has consistently attached great importance to the proliferation challenge and has placed it high on its security policy priorities. We share the view of those states that have placed this issue at the top of the arms control agenda. Accordingly, Israel fully supports the efforts of potential suppliers to enhance cooperation and coordination in order to improve export controls over sensitive items. Israel associates itself with these efforts and acts accordingly.

Peace and conciliation on the one hand, and the prevention of terrorism and WMD proliferation on the other, constitute the necessary foundations for progress in disarmament and arms control initiatives in the context of the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel intends to continue and to increase its cooperation with international efforts to curb illicit traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons and to curtail the trafficking of weapons related materials, both conventional and non-conventional, wherever there is a danger that they will reach the hands of terrorists and their supporters.

States have a national responsibility to increase control over dangerous substances and Small Arms and Light Weapons within their borders and to exercise strict and robust control over their exports.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years the First Committee has become an arena for the wrangling between different interests of groups and states. This situation is particularly true in the case of Israel where resolutions have usually amounted to no more than counterproductive condemnation divorced from the reality in our region. The time has come for the Committee to reassess its approach to the handling issues in its realm so that the real threats posed to the security of mankind are effectively addressed. After all, this is the reason behind the establishment of the First Committee. We have an important task at hand for the sake of future generations.

We believe that we are now standing at a turning point that calls for wise and careful consideration of the way we conduct our business. We must make better use of our time and resources to deal with the serious problems regarding global peace and security, rather than repeating anachronistic declarations and resolutions. One can't solve old problems with new mistakes.

In the course of our deliberations, our delegation to the First Committee intends to clarify Israel's positions regarding various resolutions on the agenda, including, of course, those concerning the Middle East.

We trust that the First Committee will rise to the daunting challenges that face it, and we wish it much success in enhancing the security of us all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman