

ISRAEL

October 11, 2004

First Committee – UNGA – 59th session
Statement of the Delegation of Israel

Alon Bar
Director of Arms Control
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Jerusalem, Israel

UN – First Committee -- 59th UNGA
Statement of Israel

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the U.N. First Committee. Let me assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and assistance in discharging your duties during the course of this session of the UN First Committee, and let me also say that we are confident in your ability to guide us through our deliberations.

Mr. Chairman,

For many years, the meeting of the First Committee has been the culmination of the disarmament and arms control working year. The First Committee, however, cannot operate in a vacuum divorced from existing and emerging threats. If it wishes to preserve its integrity and continue to play an important and active role, it must address the most relevant and urgent challenges to security and stability facing the global community. By adjusting its priorities accordingly, the deliberations of this body would have an added value to the safety of mankind. Our overall objective should be to adopt a realistic and pragmatic approach by taking into account the threats posed by recent global and regional developments.

The obstinacy to deal with out-dated or irrelevant issues has brought the entire multilateral community to an impasse from which we hardly can see the outcome. The stalemate we are witnessing in the different disarmament institutions, be it the Conference for Disarmament, the UNDC or the First Committee, are clearly the result of an unhealthy approach that has for logic "all or nothing".

Mr. Chairman,

The further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains a source of grave concern, and one of the primary challenges to national, regional and global security. Moreover, States' irresponsible behavior and reluctance to comply with their commitments, limited verification capabilities, and global terror including the involvement of non- states actors in WMD proliferation have fortified the circle of threats to international security and stability. Major events in the past two years exemplify these worrisome developments. Primary among these are the serial non-compliance of Iran, the case of Libya, and the trafficking network of AQ Khan, the latter's magnitude and potential customers yet to be fully disclosed.

This past year has also starkly demonstrated that traditional mechanisms developed to ensure verification and compliance have proven to be limited in their capacity to provide the necessary security assurances to be relied upon. Unfortunately, this has been evident more so in the Middle East where so many of these developments have transpired.

These emerging threats are not confined only to non-conventional weapons. The dangers of illicit trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons have remained a considerable threat to international security to the day-to-day life of many innocent civilians all over the world.

This threat has been exacerbated by the dangers arising from the use of MANPADS by terrorists. The international community should find ways and means to reduce this threat by enhancing control over MANPADS, limiting access to them, and developing methods to protect civil aviation. In this context, we welcome the initiative by the Australian delegation to introduce a resolution on this issue.

We also welcome the adoption of export control guidelines on MANPADS adopted last year by the Wassenaar arrangement. Israel is proud to report that we have incorporated these guidelines into our export control regulations.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the last few years, terrorism has brought about the death of thousands of innocent civilians. The linkage between terrorism and the proliferation of WMD is no longer a theoretical abstraction, but rather an all too tangible reality. Adding to the existing threat of proliferation by states, we now face an evolving threat where terrorists have horrific aspirations to obtain weapons of mass destruction. This dangerous phenomenon, combined with the broadening trend of suicide terrorism, provides a potentially apocalyptic vehicle for all who would totally obstruct the changes for a climate of security and stability both regionally and globally. There can be no euphemism for terrorism; we must address it as it really is.

We have to sadly note that only last week, terror stroked again, this time in Egypt, killing tens of Israelis on vacation and their Egyptian hosts once again we note that terrorism does not make a distinction between states, peoples and religions. Turkey, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Spain and Russia are all recent victims of the same ideology led by the principle of hatred. Hatred to the free world, hatred to democratic values and human rights and hatred towards peace and reconciliation. Ten of thousands of Israelis that have chosen the beaches of Sinai to spend their holidays, as well as their thousands Egyptian hosts, reflect the strong desire for normal, quite and peaceful life. This terrorist attack is an attack on all those who wish for a better future to the Middle East.

These traditional and emerging threats require a firm and decisive action by the international community, in addition to new solutions for today's new challenges. The First Committee can take part in this international quest by endorsing the suggestions made by the delegation of the United States and others on the follow-up of last year's resolution 58/41. The introduction of this resolution was the first step in this direction, enhancing the international community's resolve to more effectively address the problems at hand. Israel looks forward to the continued involvement of these ideas.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel supports and participates in international efforts to identify concrete and effective steps against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that cooperation and coordination at the international level or between like-minded countries should be strengthened in a significant manner.

Accordingly, Israel welcomes U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540, expressing grave concern for the threat of illicit trafficking in nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their means of delivery - in particular to non-states actors. In this regard, Israel has also expressed its support for the "Proliferation Security Initiative". In our view, similar and equal determination should be attached to the bilateral and multilateral efforts to curb the transfer, acquisition and use of MANPADS and very short-range rockets and missiles by terrorists.

We believe that export control regimes constitute an essential tool in the fight against efforts made by both states and non-states actors to obtain and acquire WMD-related materials. Israel fully associates itself with the efforts made by the export control regimes to update their lists and guidelines in order to encounter the new challenges described above.

Israel believes that a realistic approach to confronting these dangerous threats begins at home, through responsible and clear policies that prevent proliferation. Individual states can strengthen the international community's joint efforts towards these ends. Each state should account for its own actions. International decisions cannot be a substitute for national control of sensitive materials and accountability for actions carried out under its jurisdiction.

For its part, Israel adopted on March 30th of this year a new Export and Import Control Order designed to consolidate and further regulate control over chemical, biological and nuclear exports. The new order includes a "catch all" provision that prohibits the export of materials and items designated for WMD programs and establishes a licensing requirement for sensitive items based on lists of the Australia Group and the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

In addition, it should also be noted that since 1991, Israel has adopted the guidelines and annex of the MTCR in its domestic legislation. Israel has remained an adherent to this important regime since then and has continued to develop its working relations with the organization.

Moreover, in view of regional threats and the need for responsible and cautious policies, Israel enforces strict controls on conventional defense exports, including the export of technologies and know-how. We however find it necessary to underline the fact that the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons to terrorist groups in our region continues with the ongoing assistance of certain states.

Mr. Chairman,

As mentioned earlier on in our statement, the world has been confronted with emerging threats to security and stability, and unfortunately, a large part of this reality is playing itself out in the Middle East.

Some states in our region have resolved to create a dangerous combination of: development of WMD capabilities- in total disregard of their international obligations, contacts with non-state actors in the field of transfer of arms and sensitive materials, and support of terrorist organizations. The combination of these irresponsible behaviors with public threats against the very existence of the State of Israel is leading our region far from the vision of peace and security. The ramifications of this dangerous situation will echo well beyond the confines of the Middle East, and affect stability on a global scale.

The events of the past year, especially in our region, have boldly underlined the discrepancies between the official commitments of states in the Middle East and their actual behavior. This reality, along with the inherent limitations of arms control treaties, is just another reminder of the inability of treaties to provide Israel with necessary security assurances. Moreover, the very states involved in developing their WMD capabilities in defiance of their international obligations, have also chosen the path of hostility and animosity. Hence, in the Middle East there is no substitute for a gradual process of confidence building, based on direct dialogue and negotiations, involving all parties, and leading to the construction of a regional security framework.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years, the UN Disarmament Machinery, including the First Committee, has become an arena for the wrangling between the different interests of groups and states. We feel therefore that in order to change this reality we should create a collective interest for a more focused and pragmatic action directly related to the most significant challenges to security. Agendas of virtual reality, motivated by extraneous political interests, and with little connection to actual regional risks, should make way for a new and realistic agenda that would seek to effectively strengthen international security and stability. In our view, improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the United Nations First Committee should provide the United Nations General Assembly with better means to address the challenges to security and stability.

Thank you,

Mr. Chairman.