



Mission permanente d'Israël
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies
et des Organisations Internationales à Genève

משלחת ישראל
ליד משרד האומות המאוחדות
והארגונים הבינלאומיים בג'נבה

FAREWELL SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR YAAKOV LEVY,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

19 August 2004

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

Since it is the first time I take the floor under your Presidency, let me congratulate you on your elevation to this high post; be assured that our delegation will support you in your endeavors.

Mr. President, Dear Colleagues,

During four years of work in the Conference on Disarmament the Israeli delegation has participated in an active and sincere manner in discussions, both formal and informal, consultations, in plenary sessions as well as within the Western Group, culminating in our assuming the rotating presidency of the Conference about a year ago.

This involvement, including presiding over the Conference, is in our view a demonstration of Israel's participation, on an equal footing, in the work of the international community.

Israel has also participated in other disarmament fora taking place in Geneva in our view demonstrating in a constructive fashion its involvement in the negotiations of the CCW where agreement was reached on the Fifth Protocol regarding explosive remnants of war, thus taking an active part in the only recent achievement of the world of disarmament.

These four years of activity in the Conference on Disarmament have coincided with events that changed the outlook on the world of disarmament. I refer of course to the events of September 11, and the emergence of the threat of the combination of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, as well as recent revelations regarding the lack of efficacy of the international regimes and the need to bring them up-to-date.

In four years of work in the CD, we recently witnessed an interesting momentum around the initiative of the Ambassadors of Mexico and his successors, especially the Ambassador of Morocco. This initiative created informal discussions regarding various subjects on the agenda, culminating with a discussion on the subject of emerging threats. This discussion and its continuation will no doubt enable the CD to better connect with current reality and emerge as an up-to-date body rather than as an isolated and lofty forum. It is imperative that members of the CD be fully cognizant of current emerging threats, otherwise the chance of a breakthrough in its work could be remote.

Disarmament is, in our view, not a goal as such, rather an instrument through which countries secure their vital interests. Israel, like any other member of the Conference, will view and evaluate any proposal through this prism. The consensus mode is crucial to such an important forum ensuring that each country will be able to feel comfortable in examining whatever proposals in light of its particular security interests. Consensus is a cornerstone of the world of disarmament.

The involvement of civil society in the work of the CD, in a measured way, took some steps forward recently, beginning with the initiative of the Irish Presidency, continuing with our own Presidency and culminating with the proposal presented by the Kenyan Presidency. We felt a degree of satisfaction being party to this process.

On a more personal note, my four years as Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament as well as to the United Nations and other International Organizations has given me the pleasure of interacting with a multifaceted and multicultural world present in Geneva. The Conference on Disarmament, considered a most exclusive club, embraced me as a full member even though as all of you know, as an ambassador who covers other organizations, I was often called away to take part in other fora, even on days of Plenary and regional group meetings. Still, I appreciate my colleagues' readiness to interact and update me on an equal footing as a full time CD ambassador, thus demonstrating that the members of this Conference indeed constitute what is known to be the "best club in town".

Even though the achievements of the Conference have fallen short of what we would have liked, the ability to interact on a continuous, informal, high-level plateau is an enriching experience I will take back with me.

As an Ambassador of a country that is not yet fully recognized by some members of the UN I had hoped that my stay in Geneva, an international town, would enable me to find new avenues for discussion and exchange, with colleagues of such countries, opportunities still denied to us on a bilateral level. This has been only partially realized. Still, I am thankful for all these colleagues, who even in the absence of formal diplomatic ties did not hesitate to engage me on a variety of formal and informal levels, contributing, I would hope very much, to a better perception of both sides' views, a process which will ultimately lead to a better understanding of the difficult path between conflict in our region and its peaceful resolution.

Thank you.