



STATEMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NAOR GILON

AT THE 25TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

(THE HAGUE, 30TH NOVEMBER – 4TH DECEMBER 2020)

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellency Director General,

At the outset, please allow us to congratulate the Chairperson on assuming the chairmanship, and let us assure you of our full cooperation.

The 25th CSP conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention is convening in a time of global struggle with the COVID 19 virus. It is a threat that knows no borders. The State of Israel expresses its condolences to the families of the victims, as their number unfortunately continues to grow. In this vain, we believe that multilateral deliberations, especially on issues of national security like those dealt with in the CSP, should adjust to the situation, with patience and caution.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since its establishment, the Chemical Weapons Convention achieved a great deal in creating norms and sets of values for the international community to comply with and obey. Based on lessons learned from history, it was clear that prohibition, compliance and verification are essential for the Convention to succeed.

Unfortunately, the use of chemical weapons by States in the Middle East, against their own population and against neighboring countries, occurred five times since the Second World War. These events were in clear violation of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 on the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. Furthermore, two additional cases of Member States from the region violating the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are still in question and need to be further investigated. Towards this end, the international community should support the important work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its bodies. There is an urgent need to focus on the implementation, compliance and verification of the obligations of States.

Mr. Chairperson,

This tumultuous year has seen some steps forward regarding the prevalent use of chemical weapons by Syria, taken by a concerned international community.

Last April we witnessed the first report issued by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) established by the OPCW in June 2018. The report attributed responsibility for three different chemical attacks on civilians in the spring of 2017 to the Syrian government, which acceded to the CWC and avowed to forgo its entire chemical weapons program.

The IIT's report (EC-94/S/5, dated 8 April 2020), came after several reports and findings of the DAT, the FFM and the JIM, which the concerned international community established since the first time Syria used chemical weapons on its own citizens in 2012. The IIT's report clearly calls on the Syrian government to cooperate with the OPCW and the international community, in rectifying the gaps and discrepancies in its declaration on chemical weapons, and to take full responsibility and be accountable for its actions in violation of its obligations under the CWC and on the destruction of its chemical weapon arsenal.

It is vital that the international community stays vigilant in dealing with this challenge of non-compliance by Syria, in order to prevent the further erosion of the absolute norm against the use of chemical weapons and to reinstate it.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since 2012 until today, approximately 200 cases of the use of toxic chemicals and their precursors as a weapon were reported. These reports mostly refer to use by the Syrian regime, but also by other players in the region.

The use of chemical weapons by a non-state actor is a deeply concerning development especially in light of further ambitions of other non-state actors to acquire and use these capabilities, also in the future. These cases continue to demonstrate the erosion of the chemical taboo and that terrorists are motivated to follow suit.

This development undermines the credibility of the Chemical Weapons Convention and sends the wrong message to those who use chemical weapons. That includes different weaponized formats and designs, traditional and new, PBA's (Pharmaceutical Based Agents), once used as a chemical weapon, especially in the Middle East. Evidently, the Middle East suffers from a culture of

non-compliance, and the violations of the Chemical Convention offer obvious evidence of this culture.

Compliance and Verification are essential for confidence building and security. Hence, attribution of the use of these Chemical Weapons, and accountability, must go hand in hand with the Convention. In addition, recurrent use of chemical weapons must be treated with the utmost concern of the international community.

Mr. Chairperson,

Israel participated actively in the negotiations and signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, as a sign of its support of the goals and purposes of this Treaty; and therefore, Israel shares the values and the norms that the Treaty represents.

This signature joined Israel's accession to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, its adherence to export control regimes, including the Australian Group, as well as its traditional support for the United Nations General Assembly First Committee Resolution regarding the CWC. In this regard, Israel has demonstrated its commitment, again, by contributing to the OPCW Center for Chemistry and Technology.

As a signatory to the Convention, we hope that others in the region who did not do so thus far will at least join our status, as a message of their commitment to the norms and values it represents. We also call upon the international community to send a strong message to the violators of the Convention.

We would like to request that this statement be adopted and circulated as an official document of the 25th CSP Conference of the CWC, and be posted on the website.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.