



*Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

**State of Israel**

Twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the State Parties

Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Modi Ephraim

General Debate

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Mr. Chairperson,  
Mr. Director General,

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

Since its establishment, the Chemical Weapons Convention has achieved a great deal in promoting values and creating verifiable norms to ensure the security and wellbeing of the international community as a whole. History has taught us that prohibition, compliance and verification are all essential in order to safeguard the norm against the use of chemical weapons. Past uses of chemical weapons, particularly in the Middle East, underscore the need for the international community to support the critical work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its mechanisms.

Mr. Chairperson,

This year's Conference of the State Parties is being held on the backdrop of the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack, in which the terrorist organization Hamas, brutally murdered more than 1200 people, among them babies, children, women and elderly people. This was not a random attack, but rather a calculated and meticulously planned, act of war by Hamas-ISIS, a terrorist group which is armed, financed and backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Chairperson,

Extremism has a tendency to evolve and aggregate. We now have evidence that beyond the atrocities of October 7<sup>th</sup>, Hamas was also planning to use chemical weapons against Israeli civilians. Files found on bodies of Hamas terrorists who infiltrated into Israel the same day of the attack, contained detailed instructions on creating chemical weapons including: how to prepare a device which can disperse cyanide agents, how to use pesticides as a means to poison people and how to locally produce other chemical weapons. The threat of the use of chemical weapons by

terrorists against Israel is indeed imminent, but these security incidents must also serve as a clear warning sign to the whole international community regarding the risk which arises from the proliferation of WMDs to non-state actors.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since its establishment, the Chemical Weapons Convention has achieved a great deal in promoting values and creating verifiable norms to ensure the security and wellbeing of the international community. With regard to Syria, in the past few years, the OPCW and its mechanisms, have conducted visits, carried out verification processes and investigated specific incidents - at times clearly designating the Syrian government as the perpetrator – as was the case with regard to the horrid chemical attack in Douma and many other known cases.

The grave challenge lies in that despite all these efforts, Syria is still attempting to advance development and production of chemical weapons, as we speak. There is new alarming information that indicates in all likelihood that research and development, weapon optimization and funding of a chemical weapons program is ongoing in Syria. Just recently the OPCW Secretariate shared the analysis of samples it collected during a visit conducted in Syria in April 2023. The results which "revealed the presence of unexpected chemicals, which may indicate undeclared activities at these sites", are extremely worrisome.

Additionally, there is irrefutable evidence that Syria has not only been avoiding accountability and evading cooperation with the OPCW, but is also actively concealing chemical weapon capabilities.

We must not be led astray by Syria. The danger of chemical weapons in Syria is not a risk of past but an evolving threat unfolding before our eyes. This information must serve a wakeup call for the international community to not only hold Syria accountable for past non-compliance but be vigilant in the investigation of Syria's current capabilities and activity with regard to its chemical weapons program.

Mr. Chairperson,

Further to previous CW compliance concerns raised within the OPCW framework, we grow increasingly alarmed that Iran is currently pursuing dual-use central nervous system acting chemicals of offensive purposes, and is aiming to arm their affiliated terrorist groups with such chemical weapons.

For years Iran has been conducting activities in R&D and operational production of Chemical weapons. It has been abusing gaps within the CWC in order to develop modern chemical weapons that disperse agents such as Fentanyl, an anesthetic which can be lethal in high doses. Some years back, an Iranian initiative in collaboration with Imam Hassan University of Tehran, developed a grenade capable of dispersing anesthetics. This research reflected Iran's interest in the production of various kinds of chemical warfare agents, especially pharmaceutical based agents (PBAs) such as Fentanyl.

In recent years NGO's have reported that Iranian Military industries provided tear-gas grenades to pro-Iran militias in Iraq. Furthermore, documented evidence from that timeframe include images of unconscious Iraqi demonstrators who were exposed to an un-identified neutralizing substance, most probably an anesthetic. These examples clearly showcase Iran's modus operandi which must be addressed head on in this forum.

This alarming Iranian activity risks increasing instability in the Middle East and elsewhere. The damage and loss of life due to proliferation of conventional weapons by Iran to its network of terror proxies - Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, the Houthis and other militias - is evident. Just imagine the devastating results if chemical weapons were to be proliferated in the same manner.

Mr. Chairperson,

Israel actively participated in the negotiations and signed the CWC in 1993, as a sign that it shares the values, norms and goals that the Convention represents and promotes. It is also important to note that Israel acceded to the 1925 Geneva Protocol,

adheres to export control regimes, including the Australia Group, and traditionally supports the United Nations General Assembly CWC First Committee resolution.

In the face of continued violations of the CWC by various actors and the culture of non-compliance in the Middle East, we call upon the international community to stand united to ensure accountability and prevent the further erosion of the absolute norm against the use of chemical weapons. Today we are all facing an evolving, multifaceted threat to our collective security. An unwavering message must be sent to those violating and those who consider violating the Convention. The time to act is now. The way in which we act will determine our common future.

Mr. Chairperson,

Before concluding, we would like to address the nature of the participation of the Palestinian delegation in the CSP. Israel wishes to note, for the record, that like many other States, it does not consider that the Palestinian entity satisfies the criteria for statehood and does not recognize it as such. The nature of Palestinian participation in the CSP does not reflect any change, and is without prejudice to the legal status of the Palestinian entity under international law.

We would like to request that this statement be designated as an official document of this Conference and be posted on both Catalyst and the public website.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.