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**ISRAEL**

**STATEMENT BY MR EYAL PROPPER, DIRECTOR  
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THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,  
His Excellency Director-General Üzümcü,  
Distinguished Ambassadors,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset let me join previous speakers in congratulating you for your election as Chair of this important Conference and wishing you all a successful outcome.

The Middle East is currently undergoing one of the most profound periods of historic transition. These changes, affecting many countries in the area, are impacting in a dramatic way the respective strategic interests of all the countries in the Middle East. These changes are also enhancing regional uncertainty that exacerbates the current instability that we have lived with in the region for decades. The continuously turmoil and violence in the Arab world provides a clear example of how fragile and unstable the region is today.

Israel still does not enjoy peace and security with all its neighbours in the region and at times our very existence is called into question by countries - like Iran - and by terrorist organisations supported by Iran including Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah. While this process of transformation may ultimately yield positive results in the region, it harbours at the same time potential risks of instability, terror and polarisation.

The lack of peace, the non-recognition of States and the absence of normalised relations between the States in the Middle East, severely undermine the role of international treaties and protocols that could work in other regions. Furthermore, no regional dialogue exists in the Middle East, nor is there a mechanism to develop confidence-building measures between the countries of the region. A process which could result in the eventual establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery is therefore incredibly complex. It raises many practical questions that emanate from the chronically unstable nature of the Middle East and the absence of a broader regional dialogue and peace.

Israel's perspective and policy, in the field of regional security and arms control, has always taken a pragmatic and realistic approach. It is rooted in its belief that all security concerns of regional members should be considered and addressed within the regional context. The essential prerequisites for the eventual establishment of the Middle East as a mutually verifiable zone, free of weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery are, inter alia,



comprehensive and durable peace between the regional parties, and full compliance by all regional States with their arms control and non-proliferation obligations.

The international experience has demonstrated that such a zone can only emanate from within a region, through direct negotiations between neighbouring States. The Middle East region is no exception. Only after the achievement of these steps, can regional States proceed to take further steps, first in the conventional sphere, including rockets and missiles, and later in the more complex non-conventional field.

In light of the aforementioned, in any future discussion in Israel regarding the Convention, Israel must take into consideration the regional developments and the overall threat assessment in all its aspects. No country, particularly Israel, can unilaterally take upon itself steps which harm its vital security interests.

Israel attaches great importance to non-proliferation, and over the years it has demonstrated a consistent policy of responsibility and restraint in this regard. Israel respects global non-proliferation norms, including in the field of export controls and enhanced cooperation, regarding the various supplier regimes. It was in this spirit that Israel engaged in the negotiations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and signed it in January 1993, when the Convention was first opened for signature. Israel supports the UN First Committee resolutions on the Convention and participates in the Convention's annual meetings of States Parties.

Israel's legislation encompasses a wide range of legal instruments aimed at preventing the proliferation of conventional and non-conventional weapons and dual use items to unauthorised recipients including terrorists or terror sponsoring States. In addition, Israel adopted in 2004 the Chemical, Biological, and Nuclear Export Control Order, which consolidates Israel's long standing practice and policy to curb WMD proliferation. The list of materials covered by the order is based on the lists of the export suppliers' regimes to which Israel is an adherent, as is the Australia Group (AG).

Unfortunately, while Israel signed the Convention, other neighbouring countries in the Middle East have used chemical weapons in living memory. Syria still maintains a considerable operational arsenal of chemical weapons and has recently admitted their possession in an official statement.

Therefore, the chemical weapons threat against Israel and its civilian population is neither theoretical nor distant. Moreover, certain countries in the Middle East remain persistent in their endeavours to acquire more weapons of mass destruction. It is a viable and real threat and its potential has manifested itself in the region. In this regard, I would like to repeat my call to all the OPCW Member States to place high on their agenda the fight against the proliferation of chemical weapons to terrorist organisations and various non-State actors. A clear message must be sent to those countries which support, supply and train terrorists.

Israel has never challenged the non-proliferation regimes, nor adopted a policy that seeks to undermine them. However, there are other countries in the Middle East that are not members of other non-proliferation treaties like the Chemical Weapons Convention or the Biological Weapons Convention. In the Middle East, chemical weapons, as well as ballistic missiles, have been used against civilian populations. In this context, the Syrian chemical weapons threat continues to cause extreme concern to Israel and the region as a whole. These and

other weapons are the weapons that threaten people's immediate sense of security and must be addressed no less than the threat of nuclear proliferation. The volatile situation in Syria is a fresh reminder of the need to work together in order to secure and dismantle chemical weapons and to prevent any transfer or illicit trafficking of these materials to terrorist organisations.

Israel attaches great importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and supports its goals. We look forward to continuing our constructive dialogue with the OPCW.

Thank you.

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