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STATEMENT

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Madam Chairperson,
Your Excellency Director General Uzumcu,
Distinguished Heads of Delegations and Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Israel fully supports the goals and purposes of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This is reflected in Israel's active and constructive participation in the negotiation of this significant treaty, its signature of the CWC in 1993, as well as the close dialogue and contacts Israel maintains with the OPCW. Israel's positive attitude towards the Treaty and the organization is similarly reflected in its customary support of the UNGA First Committee resolution regarding the CWC, as well as Israel joining the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare in 1969.

Madam Chairperson,

The removal from Syria and the destruction of the declared chemical weapons is indeed an important achievement with significant regional security ramifications. In this respect, it is important to recognize the vital work done by all the states and international organizations that took part in this mission in challenging circumstances.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the work has still not been concluded and the threats emanating from Syria, including those pertaining to residual chemical capabilities, are still valid in many

respects. Given the magnitude of Syria's chemical weapons program, with 1300 tons of chemicals declared and removed from that country, even a small percentage of residual chemical capabilities can pose a serious threat. Coupled with Syria's continued use of chemicals as a weapon of choice against its own civilian population, even after its accession to the Treaty, this casts a dark shadow over the region.

Madam Chairperson,

Since Syria's ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, dozens of incidents have been reported in which chemicals have been used against civilian population centers. A staggering number, of close to 100 cases have been reported whereby chlorine, as well as other chemicals, has been used.

The OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission reported the gathering of information, constituting "compelling confirmation", that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon "systematically and repeatedly" in three villages in northern Syria. It is with a high degree of confidence that the Fact Finding Mission asserted that the toxic chemical used was chlorine either in pure form or in a mixture. These conclusions were aptly characterized by H.E Director General Uzumchu as "deeply disturbing".

In a press release dated Sept. 10th 2014, the OPCW referred to the reduction in allegations of chemical use in May, June and July following the establishment of the Fact Finding Mission, while stating that in August "a spate of new allegations" arose leading to the Fact Finding

Mission being asked to continue its investigation. To Israel it is clear that the reduction in usage of chemicals in May through July was the immediate result of the deterrence created by the FFM. It is, however, very troubling that this deterrence was of such short a duration.

Madam Chairperson,

The repeated use of chemicals as a weapon undermines the basic premise of the CWC and further erodes the norm against the use of chemical weapons. While always abhorrent, it is especially alarming when this pattern of behavior occurs after that state has undertaken to join the CWC and to commit itself to comply with the obligations stipulated in the Treaty.

Madam Chairperson,

The remainder of residual chemical weapons capabilities in Syria is of great concern on several levels. It is concerning in itself and it is worrying in light of the ongoing instability in that country. It is also problematic in light of the extensive presence of terrorist groups and other non state actors. The international community must remain vigilant regarding these threats and foil any non compliance as well as attempts of proliferation.

Until Syria completely and accurately fulfills all of its obligations pertaining to chemical weapons, the international community must

continue to insist that all outstanding questions are fully and adequately addressed.

Madam Chairperson,

The Middle East is a region fraught with instability, conflict and hostilities. A region that faces unique security challenges which, if left unchecked, have the potential to destabilize not only the region but well beyond.

The Middle East also sorely lacks in mechanisms that could foster dialogue and greater understanding between regional players. There are no processes that could contribute to the building of confidence, de-escalation of tensions and conflict resolution as a whole.

Israel is of the view that only a pragmatic, realistic and comprehensive approach to regional security challenges can bring about a desired outcome of greater peace and stability. Security concerns of all regional states must be taken into account and addressed within the context of our present regional reality and challenges. This can only start with modest arrangements of confidence and security building measures and only once such measures are in place, have taken root and have shown to be durable and conducive, can more ambitious undertakings be considered.

Madam Chairperson,

During the last year, Israel participated at senior and authoritative level in five rounds of consultations convened by the Finnish Under-Secretary Laajava, to discuss regional security and the conditions necessary for establishing a Middle East free of all WMD and means of delivery. Israel has already stated its willingness to participate in a sixth round of consultations and has communicated this willingness to Under Secretary Laajava.

Regretfully a significant conceptual gap exists between regional states on fundamental strategic security concepts. While Israel anchors its position on the elementary, and even self-evident, concept that discussions between regional partners must be direct and based on consensus, our neighbors have yet to adopt this pragmatic and necessary approach.

Furthermore, the Arab countries have not made the slightest attempt to engage Israel directly and establish a mutually acceptable basis to convene a conference in Helsinki. Some, namely Iran and Syria, have refrained from participating altogether. If indeed this is such an important issue for the Arab group, why are they not trying to engage Israel in a way that can facilitate progress and even a breakthrough towards greater regional dialogue, peace and security.

Madam Chairperson,

Unfortunately, it is clear that the Arab group has not chosen the path of conciliation but rather that of confrontation in various multilateral fora. They claim to be forthcoming, while at the same time pursue anti-Israeli resolutions aimed at singling Israel out in the IAEA General Conference and in the UNGA First Committee.

Israel, for its part, remains committed to a process aimed at the establishment of a more secure and peaceful Middle East, free from conflicts, wars and all weapons of mass destruction.

I thank you.

