



The 20th Session of the Conference of States Parties
to the Chemical Weapons Convention

Statement by Ms. Tamar Rahamimoff-Honig

Director, Arms Control Department

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Jerusalem, Israel

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Mr. Chairperson,
H.E Director General Amb. Uzumchu,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Israel recognizes the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention and fully supports its goals and purposes. Israel played an active role in the negotiation of this Treaty and signed the CWC in January 1993. Israel's positive attitude towards the Treaty and the OPCW has been consistently manifested by the ongoing dialogue we maintain with the organization, our customary support of the UNGA First Committee resolution on the CWC, as well as our 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. Israel has a policy of adherence to the Australia Group and incorporates through its legislation the items contained in the AG's control lists.

Mr. Chairperson,

Upon signing the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, then Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said in his address; **"The Chemical Weapons Convention must refer itself to our region, and the region at large must adhere to its principles and comply with its provisions."** As events in the Middle East unfold, the veracity of this statement continues to hold true more than 20 years later. Above any other region of the world, the Middle East has persistently presented challenges of various kinds to the Treaty's regime. These challenges need to be addressed by the international community as a matter of priority.

Mr. Chairperson,

Of the challenges posed to the CWC by the Middle East, the most blatant is the non-compliance by Syria with its treaty obligations and in particular its brazen violation of the prohibition against the use of chemical weapons. Almost immediately after its accession to the treaty, the Syrian regime used chemicals as a means of warfare against its own population and continued to do so repeatedly and systematically. In lieu of the absolute prohibition against the use of chemical weapons, stipulated by the CWC, the Syrian regime has opted to implement a watered-down standard. One which defies the absolute ban against the use of chemicals as means of warfare and tolerates gaps, discrepancies and inconsistencies in declarations submitted to the OPCW. This, in addition to the retention of residual chemical weapons capabilities, including R&D, which would allow for the "rehabilitation" of Syria's chemical program in the future.

Additional challenges to the Treaty's regime, emanating from occurrences in the Middle East, involve the development of tactical methods for chemical warfare, which are used by state and non-state actors in the region alike. The CWC was developed on the premise that the usage of chemical weapons does not bring advantages to armed forces in the battlefield and that moral considerations outweigh all others. The development of tactical chemical warfare, especially in the context of civil war, is extremely worrying. Such behavior erodes the absolute prohibition against the use of chemical weapons, which is the fundamental staple of the treaty. This problem is further compounded

by the loss of sovereign control over territories, thus enabling terror organizations to plan and execute their attacks unhindered, including through the use of chemicals. In Israel's view every effort should be exerted to clarify that the international community does not view such behavior as the "new normal" and that those who try to benefit from the use of chemical weapons will be duly handled.

Mr. Chairperson,

In that light, Israel welcomes the condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of the ongoing and systematic use of chemical weapons in Syria contained in the OPCW's Executive Council decision of the of 4th February 2015, in UNSC resolution 2209 adopted on the 6th of March 2015, as well as in the UNGA's First Committee resolution on the CWC taken just a few weeks ago. This condemnation sends an important message of intolerance towards the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In that vein, it is highly unfortunate that not all member states of the OPCW's EC and not all members of the UNGA's First Committee found it possible to support this condemnation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Israel strongly welcomes the establishment of the Joint Investigation Mechanism (JIM) by UNSC resolution 2235 and sees it as an important step in the attribution of responsibility to those accountable for the use of chemical weapons. This resolution, as well as the decision of the OPCW EC of February and the resolution of UNGA First Committee on

the CWC, sends a clear message that the use of chemical weapons will not be overlooked by the international community and that justice will be served. Hopefully future use will be deterred.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is essential that the international community continues to insist that all outstanding questions regarding the Syrians declarations are resolved and until such time the Syrian chemical file will remain open. There can be no fatigue in demanding that the Syrian regime live up to its obligations to the fullest. Any other message will neither help the Syrian people nor the absolute ban on chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

While the challenges outlined previously originate in the Middle East, their ramifications are not restricted to the region alone. They reverberate and pose dangers far beyond the Middle East's geographic scope. The wide scale manhunt and investigations carried out in Europe following the tragic terror attacks in Paris by Da'esh (ISIL), which lead to the discovery of preparations for chemical and biological acts of terror, indicate that these threats cannot be contained to the Middle East. As new challenges emerge from the region, the Treaty and its Member states should turn their full attention and sustained efforts to curbing them through the development of appropriate tools. This is vital if the Treaty is indeed resolved to maintain its role as a bulwark against chemical weapons, as stated in the leper declaration of April this year,

on the occasion of the 100 year commemoration for the first large scale use of chemical weapons.

I'd like to request that this statement be placed on the OPCW website.

I thank you