

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellency Director General,
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, 2017, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will celebrate its 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapon Convention. We would like to congratulate you for the devotion and the ongoing efforts to bring about better and peaceful reality to the international community, as Chemical Weapons are concern.

The reasons for the creation of the Convention are still very much relevant today and will be of profound importance for generations to come, around the world and especially in our region - the Middle East. Therefor we can't over emphasize the need to continue to pursue the values it represent, its implementation and its compliance, facing the old and the new challenges at hand, if we want to achieve the goal of absolute prohibition on Chemical Weapons.

Israel participated actively in the negotiations and signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, as a sign of its support on the goals and purposes of this Treaty and therefore shares the values the Treaty represents. This signature joined Israel's accession to the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Method of Warfare, its adherence to export control regimes including the Australian Group as well as its traditional support for United Nation General Assembly First Committee resolution regarding the CWC.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since the end of the Second World War, till today, Chemical Weapons were used several times, as a method of warfare. The use was brutal and barbaric, with mass casualties and terror, aimed mostly at civil populations. Almost all cases of usage of Chemical weapons, after the Second World War, were by regimes in the Middle East.

Once a regime signs and ratify a Convention or a Treaty, and at the same time violates it systematically, it challenges the values and the norms the international

community is trying to create. It also shows that these regimes regard a Convention or a Treaty as a recommendation rather than an obligation. Unfortunately this is the sad reality in the Middle East in regards to the CWC, the NPT and many other obligations in this realm.

Mr. Chairperson,

Once the use of Chemical weapons becomes a routine in the Middle East it was only a question of time till Non State Actors showed interest to gain the same capabilities. It goes hand in hand. It is a very dangerous link that must be addressed and stopped. This cycle must be stopped and it should start with compliance of member states.

Mr. Chairperson,

The continued use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian regime, even after its accession to the CWC, is not only morally abhorrent, but also a clear violation of the legal obligations the Syrian regime has undertaken towards the international community to forgo these weapons. There is no greater challenge to the CWC, and the norm contained therein, than a State Party using Chemical Weapons.

It is very clear and there is no doubt: the use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian regime is a decision taken by the regime, intentionally, while knowing the outcome, as was already established by the investigations carried out by international bodies. It is systematically, it is ongoing, it is a choice the regime took against all its obligations to the Treaty and therefore it is responsible for its actions.

The reports of the Joint Investigation Mechanism (JIM) of October 2017, August and October 2016, and the reports of the OPCW, with attention to the last report of the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) regarding the attack on the 30th of March 2017 on Al-Latamnah, clearly demonstrate that there is a consistent pattern of behavior in the use of Chemical weapons, by the Syrian regime, and of violating all its obligations to the Treaty. This adds up to the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the Syrian declarations to the OPCW, as well as Syrian retention of Chemical Weapons capabilities including R&D. All of that demands further investigation.

It should be emphasized that the latest JIM conclusions unequivocally determine that the Assad Regime is responsible for killing dozens of people through the use of lethal gas in Khan Shaykun. The report provides additional evidence both of the Syrian regime's continued deadly Chemical Weapons capabilities and its willingness to use them. The international community must act decisively to investigate every instance of the use of Chemical Weapons and to bring those responsible to justice.

Mr. Chairperson,

There are growing concerns that barring international vigilance and pressure, Syria could rehabilitate and continue to develop its Chemical Weapons program, thus undermining the achievements gained so far by the removal and destruction of 1300 tons of Chemical Weapons from the Syrian arsenal.

In conclusion, Israel welcomes the condemnation of the ongoing use of Chemical Weapons by the Assad Regime. It is essential that the international community continues to insist that Syria be held fully accountable for its actions and ongoing violations of the Treaty and insist on full compliance of the Treaty, including all the outstanding questions in regards to its Chemical Weapons program. We see great importance in the work that is been done by the OPCW and the JIM and encourage you to continue to pursue your work.

I request that this statement be placed on the OPCW's web site.

Thank you.