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Chemical Weapons Convention

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STATEMENT

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Mr. Chairperson,
His Excellency Director General Uzumcu,
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset let me join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as chair of this important conference and hope sincerely that our deliberations will lead to a successful outcome. I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the Director General Ahmet Uzumcu and the OPCW for the Nobel Peace Prize award which recognizes the Organization's tireless effort to combat proliferation of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

When the Chemical Weapons Convention was drafted in the beginning of the 1990's, different circumstances prevailed in the Middle East. The security atmosphere in the region seemed to indicate that positive changes may be underway. Israel, as a state that was actively involved in the negotiations of the CWC, signed the Convention in 1993 in recognition of its importance and in support of its principles and the vision of a world free of chemical weapons. In January 13, 1993, the Foreign Minister of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres, signed the CWC in Paris and stated, inter alia, as follows:

"In the spirit of the global pursuit of general and complete disarmament, and the establishment of regional and global arms control regimes, Israel

suggests to all the countries of the region to construct a mutually verifiable zone, free of surface-to-surface missiles and of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. In order to establish regional security it is necessary:

- * To curtail the arms race and prevent the proliferation of destabilizing weapons;

- * To build and nurture mutual confidence between states;

- * To diminish the levels of suspicion, hostility and conflagration;

- * To reduce the incentives and capabilities for launching surprise attacks;

- * To enhance crisis management and stability;

- * To ensure compliance with arms control accords".

Unfortunately, the spirit of peace, regional cooperation and stability did not prevail. These factors continue to impact Israel's vital margins of security, in a region which is undergoing greater turbulence and instability. As part of Israel broad threat assessment, Israel closely monitors the future strategic developments within our neighboring countries, as well as the implementation and verification of UNSC Resolution 2118 regarding the full elimination of Syria's chemical weapons capabilities.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Middle East is one of the most daunting challenges to arms control and disarmament in the international arena faced by the international community. The region is undergoing historic and significant

transformational changes. The current turmoil in the Arab world, the continuing instability within several states in the area and the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime against its own people in the last year, demonstrate how fragile and unstable the region continues to be.

In addition, during the last two years one should recall that conventional weapons alone have killed more than 100,000 people in the conflict in Syria. The brutality of the Syrian regime merits the strongest condemnation of all members of the international community. Israel supports the steps that have been taken by the international community so far, and the removal and destruction of all Syria's chemical weapons must remain a high priority. The international community must ensure that the process is properly monitored, verified and completed while abiding by the agreed timelines. It must also ensure that no entity takes advantage of the process to advance its capacities and knowledge of chemical weapons. This will safeguard the peoples of Syria and neighboring countries and bring greater stability to the Middle East, as a whole.

Mr. Chairperson,

Given this regional complexity, it will not be a simple task to create a mechanism that can enable all the regional parties to handle all the problems we face in the region. We need an infrastructure of peace, co-existence and mutual recognition that will always be vital precursors to any arms control measures in the region. The lack of peace, the non-recognition of states and absence of normalized 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.

A significant conceptual gap exists between the states of the region on fundamental strategic security concepts. Israel believes that the Middle East countries should try to bridge this gap through direct dialogue, and reach agreements by consensus. A successful direct multilateral dialogue could send a strong signal that the regional partners are capable of working together towards the shared vision of a more secure and peaceful Middle East, free from conflicts, wars and weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to inform this distinguished forum that in the past two years Israel has conducted numerous and lengthy discussions with Under Secretary of State of Finland, Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, as well as with many other representatives of relevant countries, and has outlined in great detail our views and positions regarding the challenges of regional security in the area. Accordingly, Israel participated in two regional consultations that were held in Glion, Switzerland, by the invitation of Ambassador Laajava. We hope that based on these consultations our Arab neighbors will decide to work together on regional cooperation, through direct communication and consensus, rather than accept continued diplomatic confrontation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Israel over the years has consistently demonstrated a policy of responsibility and commitment to the principle of non-proliferation norms, including in the field of export controls, and enhanced cooperation with the various supplier regimes. 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 unauthorized recipients, including terrorists or terror sponsoring states. In addition, Israel adopted in 2004 the Chemical, Biological, and Nuclear Export Control Order, while the list of materials covered by the Order is based on the lists of the export suppliers' regimes to which Israel are adherent, including the Australia Group.

Mr. Chairperson,

At this moment in history, when the Middle East stands at a crossroads and it is not yet clear if freedom and moderateness will triumph over tyranny and fundamentalism, we should follow the call from the Bible: "Shun evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it". (Psalms, Chapter 35, Verse 15).

Thank you.