



Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

State of Israel

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Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Nadav Eshcar

General Debate

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Mr. Chairperson,

Mr. Director General,

At the outset, please allow us to congratulate HE Ambassador Almir Šahović on assuming the position of Chairperson. Our delegation assures you of our full cooperation. This is also an opportunity to thank Director General Arias for his leadership of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Since its establishment, the Chemical Weapons Convention has achieved a great deal in promoting values and creating verifiable norms to ensure the security and wellbeing of the international community as a whole. The OPCW has always been pivotal in promoting awareness, transparency, education and capacity building in various forms and areas. With the challenges of our time, and the diverse risks and opportunities around us, its work remains vital. As a signatory to the CWC, Israel supports the work of the OPCW in a variety of ways. We are glad to see the successful functioning of the Center for Chemistry and Technology since its inauguration, serving as a reminder of the organization's vital role. Israel contributed to the opening of the Chemtech Center and we are pleased with its operation.

Chair,

History has taught us that prohibition, compliance and verification are all essential in order to safeguard the norm against the use of chemical weapons. As current events in the world prove, protecting this norm from eroding is as important as ever. Certain Rogue actors – Member States as well as non-state entities have blatantly put this vital norm in jeopardy, and the international community must step up to this challenge with no delay. Past uses of chemical weapons underscore the importance of supporting the critical work of the OPCW and its mechanisms. Unfortunately, the Middle East, as a region entangled in a culture of non-compliance and instability, leaves its inhabitants exposed to the risk of such use by malicious actors.

Mr. Chairperson,

It has now been almost 14 months since Israel suffered the October 7th 2023 attack, one of the most brutal terrorist attacks in the history of mankind. On this day the terrorist organization Hamas, massacred more than 1200 people, among them babies, children,

women and elderly people, and kidnapped hundreds more into its terror tunnels in Gaza. 101 of these hostages are still in Hamas' hands. Hamas' terrorists infiltrated into Israel seeking to inflict as much pain and death as possible and with an aim to use any weapon at their disposal. In that regard, we should note that files found on bodies of Hamas terrorists, contained detailed instructions on creating chemical weapons including, how to prepare a device which can disperse cyanide agents, how to use pesticides as means to poison people and how to locally produce other chemical weapons. Some ready to use bottles of poison, were found as well.

Chair – the October 7th massacre was not a random attack, but rather a calculated and meticulously planned, act of war by Hamas, a terrorist group which is armed, financed and backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran – a country, present in this forum, that seeks to spread chaos in the Middle East by using proxies. Iran, which arms and trains Hezbollah, a terrorist group that launched war against Israel from Lebanon on October 8th 2023. Iran, which trains and supports the Houthis that launch missiles and UAVs at vessels in the Indian Ocean. Iran, which instructs the Shii'te Militias in Iraq, and Iran which had launched all-out direct missile attacks against Israel twice in less than 6 months.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we mark the 20-year anniversary for UNSC resolution 1540, we must all admit that the relevance of this framework, aimed at combating the flow of WMD's to NSA's, is more crucial than ever. It is our global and shared responsibility to make sure WMD's will not be transferred to terrorists.

Chair,

Over the past few years we have seen the intensification of malign interaction between certain states and NSA's and especially terrorist organizations. In this context, the OPCW IIT report on the incident in Marea, published last February this year, serves as a mortifying reminder of the risk of diversion of chemical weapons falling into the hands of blood-thirsty organizations.

For years Iran has been conducting activities in R&D and operational production of Chemical weapons. It has been abusing gaps within the CWC in order to develop

modern chemical weapons that disperse agents such as Fentanyl, an anesthetic which can be lethal in high doses. Some years back, an Iranian initiative in collaboration with Imam Hassan University of Tehran, developed a grenade capable of dispersing anesthetics. This research reflected Iran's interest in the production of various kinds of chemical warfare agents, especially pharmaceutical based agents (PBA's).

Alongside and further to previous Chemical Weapons compliance concerns raised within the OPCW framework, we grow increasingly alarmed that Iran is weaponizing pharmaceutical-based agents for military purposes as part of a chemical weapons program, and arms their affiliated terrorist groups with such chemical weapons.

In recent years NGO's have reported that Iranian Military industries provided tear-gas grenades to pro-Iran militias in Iraq. Furthermore, documented evidence from that timeframe include images of unconscious Iraqi demonstrators who were exposed to an un-identified neutralizing substance, most probably an anesthetic. These examples clearly showcase Iran's modus operandi which must be addressed head on in this forum. This alarming Iranian activity which can bring about further devastation and death must be stopped.

Mr. Chairperson,

With regard to Syria, in the past few years, the OPCW and its mechanisms have conducted visits, carried out verification processes and investigated specific incidents - at times clearly designating the Syrian government as the perpetrator – as was the case with regard to the horrid chemical attack in Douma and many other known cases.

Chair, the grave threat with regard to Syria's chemical weapons' project is vivid and horrifying. Despite all efforts, Syria is still attempting to advance development and production of chemical weapons, as we speak. Colleagues, Syria has not only been avoiding accountability and evading cooperation with the OPCW, but it is actively concealing chemical weapon capabilities. There is clear and detailed information that indicates in all likelihood, that research and development, weapon optimization and funding of a chemical weapons program is ongoing in Syria. In this context, we note the OPCW's analysis of samples it collected during visits in Syria in April 2023, and May 2024, which "revealed the presence of unexpected chemicals, which may indicate undeclared activities at these sites".

Chair,

We must not be led astray by Syria. The danger of chemical weapons in Syria is not a risk of the past, but an evolving threat unfolding before our eyes. This information must serve as a wakeup call for the international community to not only hold Syria accountable for past non-compliance, but be vigilant in the investigation of Syria's current capabilities and activity with regard to its chemical weapons program.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson,

Israel actively participated in the negotiations and signed the CWC in 1993. Israel shares the values, norms and goals that the Convention represents and promotes. It is also important to note that Israel acceded to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, adheres to export control regimes, including the Australia Group, and traditionally supports the United Nations General Assembly CWC First Committee resolution.

In the face of continued violations of the CWC, by various actors and the culture of non-compliance in the Middle East, we call upon the international community to stand united to ensure accountability and prevent the further erosion of the absolute norm against the use of chemical weapons. Today, we are all facing an evolving, multifaceted threat to our collective security. An unwavering message must be sent to those violating and those who consider violating the Convention. The time to act is now. The way in which we act will determine our common future.

Before concluding, we would like to address the nature of the participation of the Palestinian delegation in the CSP. Israel wishes to note, for the record, that like many other States, it does not consider that the Palestinian entity satisfies the criteria for statehood and does not recognize it as such. The nature of Palestinian participation in the CSP does not reflect any change, and is without prejudice to the legal status of the Palestinian entity under international law.

We would like to request that this statement be designated as an official document of this Conference and be posted on both Catalyst and the public website.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.