First Committee
72nd UN General Assembly

Statement by
Mr. Eran Yuvan
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thematic discussion on
Nuclear weapons

United Nations, New York
13 October 2017
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will deliver an abbreviated version of my delegation's statement today to adhere to the time limit. The full version will be available on PaperSmart.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel maintains a policy of responsibility and restraint in the nuclear domain consonant with the underlying goals and principles of the non-proliferation regime. Accordingly, and wherever possible, Israel joins and brings itself closer to international norms on nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation.

Israel signed the CTBT in 1996 and is an active contributor to the development of all elements of the Treaty's verification regime. In this vein, Israel transmits data from its certified seismic stations to the International Data Center, an obligation which, unfortunately, some regional states have yet to undertake. Israel was one of the sponsors of UNSC Resolution 2310 on the CTBT, a clear indicator of our support for this Treaty.

Israel shares the concern that radioactive sources might be used to commit acts of terrorism. We firmly believe that such materials must remain under the full control of the competent authorities and be used appropriately. The nuclear security challenge should be addressed, not only on the national level, but also through regional and global cooperation and coordination. In this respect, Israel has repeatedly stated its willingness to cooperate with any state in the Middle East, to strengthen nuclear security and safety.

In connection to this threat, Israel signed the International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) and acceded to the Convention of the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (CPPNM), including the 2005 amendment, which entered into force recently. In addition, Israel is a member of the
Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and values its hands-on approach towards implementation of tools to combat nuclear terrorism.

Israel endorses the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources. We are taking part in the IAEA Illicit Trafficking Database and participate in the IAEA's Nuclear Security Guidance Committee (NSGC). Israel recognizes the importance of combining legal international tools and export control policy and has adopted a policy of adherence to the NSG since 2004, as well as to the other supplier regimes. Items listed in the regimes' control lists are incorporated into the Israeli export control mechanism, as well as amendments made to these lists.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel values the NPT and recognizes its contribution to the non-proliferation regime. At the same time, however, it is also clear that the NPT is insufficient in fully addressing the deliberate advancement of clandestine military nuclear programs by states with little or no regard for international legal obligations they have undertaken.

Nowhere is this problem more apparent than in the Middle East, with four out of five cases of non-compliance with the NPT emanating from that region – in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya. The fifth case of non-compliance with the Treaty is DPRK, which is a source of grave concern in itself, given that DPRK is heavily involved with proliferation to the Middle East. Israel has joined the international community in condemning the DPRK's recent nuclear test, and has expressed concern regarding the danger posed by the DPRK to regional and global stability.

Unfortunately, and despite its importance, the NPT has not prevented substantial violations of its obligations by these member states, and has been insufficient in remedying these violations once they have been discovered. Iran is an illuminating case in point, as it remains the most significant threat to the Middle
East and beyond, even after the agreement between Iran and the P5+1 was reached. The NPT has been inadequate in preventing the advancement of Iran's nuclear program due to Iran's acts of concealment and duplicity. When these violations were ultimately discovered, the NPT lacked the tools to recognize and address them appropriately.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel did not participate in the negotiations on a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, concluded on the 7th of July 2017 in New York, and voted against the First Committee and UNGA resolutions pertaining to this process.

Israel's deep reservations regarding this initiative were based on substantive as well as procedural considerations. On the substantive side, Israel is concerned *inter alia* by arms control and disarmament processes, which fail to give due regard to the security and stability context when drafting disarmament measures. Such endeavors may result in arrangements and agreements, which hinder rather than reinforce disarmament processes as well as global and regional security. On the procedural aspect, Israel firmly believes that such negotiations should be undertaken in the appropriate forums, under the appropriate rules of procedure, which would not undermine national security considerations.

It should be emphasized that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons does not create, contribute to the development, or indicate the existence of customary international law related to the subject or the content of the Treaty. Moreover, the Treaty does not reflect legal norms that apply to states that are not party to the Treaty, and does not alter in any way the existing rights or obligations upon states that have not joined the Treaty.
Mr. Chairman,

While there is no dispute that the twenty-year-long stalemate in the CD is a long period, and we should make every effort to return the CD to the path of negotiations, we must, at the same time, seriously consider the implications and disadvantages that stem from using independent processes, and in particular, the diversion of international attention toward weaker or less effective solutions. The price we will most likely pay if we use these processes will be the lack of participation by those who must be part of such negotiations. While a non-inclusive process might forge agreements more quickly, it runs the risk of producing a depleted or hollow outcome. Such negotiations also create a more divisive atmosphere, rather than adding to the promotion of agreements on disarmament matters.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

Israel has always endorsed a realistic approach and policy regarding regional security and arms control. These are rooted in our belief that the broad range of security concerns of all regional members should be taken into account and addressed realistically within a direct regional dialogue. While Israel has demonstrated sincere commitment to the process of direct dialogue and confidence-building in the region, our Arab neighbors have, unfortunately, preferred to invest their efforts in divisive resolutions like the so-called "Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East," tabled annually in this Committee. Israel was disappointed to see that this draft resolution has, once again, been submitted this year. Israel regrets the Arab group's choice to endorse a path of confrontation rather than conciliation. Resolutions like these only serve short-sighted political interests and hamper long-term prospects for a better security environment in the Middle East.

I thank you.