First Committee
74th UN General Assembly

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement by

Mr. Asaf Segev
Arms Control Department
Division for Strategic Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel

Thematic Discussion on
Conventional Weapons

United Nations, New York
October 24 2019
Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Allow me to begin by referring to the threat posed by conventional weapons. In this regard, it is clear that states need to abide by their international obligations and not proliferate conventional weapons but rather to fight proliferation and be effective in the management of their stockpiles.

Unfortunately, in the past few years, conventional weapons have been acquired and proliferated throughout the Middle East in unprecedented quantities and quality. These weapons find their way into the hands of oppressive regimes, terrorist organizations and terrorist-sponsoring countries, which use them to spread violence and extremism.

In this context, Iran, in an attempt to gain regional dominance and spread its extremist ideology, is the biggest proliferator of conventional arms in the region and beyond, using proxy organizations to spread terror and engage in hostilities. The Iranian regime has established a land, maritime and air corridor, stretching from Iran to Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, in order to move weapons and missiles from its territory to militias and terrorist organizations in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. Furthermore, Iran is creating local hubs with missile capabilities in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Since the entry into force of the JCPOA, Iran has also exported a significant amount of rockets and advanced missile technology to Hezbollah in Lebanon and to the Houthis in Yemen. Iran is also financing and fomenting Palestinian terrorism.

In other cases, such as Syria, the regime tragically uses its own weapons, conventional and non-conventional alike, mainly against its own civilian population, and the death toll is startling.

Mr. Chairperson,

Countries, like Iran and Syria, should continue to be under the relevant international sanctions. Clearly, they are working against the international community, to bring about the collapse of the arms control fora it created.

Mr. Chairperson,
The UN Program of Action (POA) in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and the Tracing Instrument (ITI) are important instruments in combating the illicit trade and diversion of arms. Israel welcomes the extensive work and achievements thus far, but acknowledges that great challenges still lie ahead. We believe that there is a need to focus on the implementation of the PoA on SALW and its ITI and stay true to its scope, rather than to try to inject other elements that are not part of its scope. On ammunition, for example, we believe that the PoA is not the right venue, as another venue has already been chosen – the Group of Government Experts (GGE) meeting in 2020.

Mr. Chairperson,

Israel values the mechanism of the UN register and submits its report on an annual basis. It is very unfortunate that in the Middle East, Israel is one of the few countries to submit an annual report. Israel urges all states to submit their reports, subject to their national security considerations. Israel submitted the Military Expenditure report as well.

Israel acknowledges the significance of the Arms Trade Treaty as a milestone in the international community's pledge to enhance efforts to curb the illicit transfers of arms. Israel, as a Signatory State, supports the goals and purposes of this Treaty, and many of the Treaty's principles and standards are already embodied in Israel's robust export policy and control mechanisms.

Mr. Chairperson,

In Israel's view, the fact that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons strives to strike the necessary balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations in the application of International Humanitarian Law, makes it an important instrument in the conventional field.

It is also an appropriate forum for discussing many challenges in this sphere. Israel values very much its principles and finds the in-depth discussions in the GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), satisfying and beneficial. Israel also values the discussions on Mines Other than Anti-Personal Mines (MOTAPM) and Improvised Explosive Devises (IED's), which are useful for better understanding the
challenges that lie before us. Israel values the mechanism of the CCW and submits its annual report of the Amended Protocol II as well as the annual compliance report of the CCW.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.