



First Committee
73rd UN General Assembly

FULL VERSION

Explanation of Vote by
Mr. Ofer Moreno
Director, Arms Control Department,
Division for Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel

Action on all draft resolutions and decisions
submitted under agenda items

United Nations, New York
1st to 9th November 2018

EOV - L.1 – “Establishment of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Region of the Middle East”

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to use this opportunity to share Israel's explanation of vote:

It took a long time and considerable international efforts to reach consensus on L.1 resolution on the "Establishment of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Region of the Middle East".

Even though Israel had its own deep reservations from this resolution, that have been voiced every year in our EOP, Israel supported this resolution for the sake of the consensus, as Israel's consistent approach was always constructive.

It is very unfortunate that this long standing practice is about to be broken by the Arab group. By imposing a new unilateral and destructive resolution entitled "Convening a Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction", the Arab group has altered the status quo.

Furthermore, as our position was stated in the General Debate and in the Nuclear Cluster discussions, from now on Israel will not cooperate with regional arms control initiatives.

We regret that we do not see the same enthusiasm by the advocates of this resolution to solve the real threats and challenges of the Middle East.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

EOV- L.2 - "The Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East"

Mr. Chairperson,

Resolution L.2 titled "The Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East", which Israel voted against, has been submitted once again by the Arab Group. This is an unfortunate attempt to divert the First Committee's attention away from the real proliferation challenges facing the Middle East. This approach serves neither the interests of regional states nor those of the international community.

Not only does this resolution distort the truth, it also fails to genuinely confront the real WMD risks in the region. This should worry all of us, as this resolution undermines any attempt to address regional threats effectively, as well as curtails chances for a real and constructive dialogue between states of the region.

Mr. Chairperson,

The "Risk" resolution is detached from reality and from what the peoples of the Middle East have been experiencing; unrest and growing instability, unrelenting violence, large scale displacement of populations and territories ceded or abandoned to terrorists. Against this backdrop, the threat of proliferation of WMDs cannot be ignored or misrepresented as the text of this resolution purports to do.

Mr. Chairperson,

The authors of this resolution neglect to mention that four countries of the region namely: Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya - some of which are sponsors of this resolution - violated their NPT obligations and promoted a clandestine military nuclear programs in contravention of their international obligations. They also overlooked Iran's continued aspirations for nuclear weapons, although vast and alarming information on their clandestine nuclear program was revealed.

In this vein, it is important to recall that since the Implementation Day of the JCPOA, Iran tested more than 20 ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. These were of various ranges, among them a missile with a range of 2,500 km which also can reach well beyond the Middle East, a missile with an inscription stating Israel should be wiped off the face of the earth and a missile fired toward a Star of

David drawn on the ground. The Secretary General's reports under UNSCR 2231, called Iran to refrain from conducting these missile tests, warning that they have the potential to increase tensions in the region. He also clearly stipulated that Iran's missile tests are not consistent with the spirit of the JCPOA.

In light of Iran's subversive activity in the region, as well as its support for terrorist organizations in the region, which includes supplying weapons, financial support and military training, it is clear that the authors of this resolution have misdirected their efforts.

Mr. Chairperson,

In addition, this resolution deviates attention away from the atrocities conducted in Syria, in particular the use of Chemical Weapons. The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime has become a pattern, as we have seen in the past years. This is especially significant in light of remaining discrepancies, inconsistencies and gaps in the Syrian declarations to the OPCW and the growing concerns about residual chemical weapons capabilities, including R&D, which would allow Syria to rehabilitate its chemical weapons program.

Mr. Chairperson,

We reject this resolution in its entirety. Attempts to side-track, detour or shortcut by submitting one-sided and biased resolutions in the multilateral fora will not succeed.

Thank You.

EOV - L.22 – “Convening a Conference on the Establishment of a ME Zone Free of Nuclear Weapon and other Weapons of Mass Destruction”

Mr. Chairperson,

It is very unfortunate that the Arab Group came with a hindering initiative to the arms control fora, rather than confronting the real and daily security challenges in the Middle East.

As mentioned in our interventions before, during the last few decades, Israel’s consistent approach was always constructive. We emphasized that any process must be conducted on a consensual base, eminent from the region itself, freely arrived at and inclusive to all states of the region without prejudice, direct and not through third parties, aimed toward confidence building and must take under consideration all security concerns of all parties involved.

However, it seems, once again, that the Arab Group is interested in creating another platform to single out Israel, imposing rather than discussing, through third party rather than direct, open ended rather than inclusive to all members of the region, and with no respect to national security consideration but a one-sided destructive approach.

Obviously, this Israeli position is well known. The Arab group chose this path intentionally, knowing that Israel cannot and will not take this path.

Mr. Chairperson,

Obviously, this resolution urges Israel to a position that will no longer permit us to cooperate with future regional arms control initiatives and will vote against any initiative in this regard in the relevant multilateral fora.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Israel voted once again this year against resolution L.24 titled "The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons".

Israel did not participate in the negotiations, which were concluded on the 7th of July 2017 in New York, on a “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons”, and voted against the First Committee and UNGA resolutions pertaining to this process during 2016 and 2017.

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 of, or indicate the existence of customary international law related to the subject of 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 it does not alter in any way existing rights or obligations upon states that have not joined this Treaty.

Thank you.

EOV - L.10 - "General and Complete disarmament: Missiles"

Mr. Chairperson,

Year after year we are confronted with the same baffling situation whereby one member state, name the Islamic Republic of Iran, is the proponent sponsor of a decision pertaining to missiles, and on top of all in the nuclear cluster.

Iran is a violator of the NPT, who did not answer to questions on its clandestine nuclear program until today, and continues to hide relevant information and sites from the IAEA. Furthermore, Iran is also violating several United Nations Security Council Resolutions and Arms Control instruments on missile proliferation as well, due to heavy involvement in the proliferation of missiles and rockets to numerous terrorist organizations in the Middle East, and its active R&D program also to carry WMD warheads.

Mr. Chairperson,

In our perspective, it is inconceivable that Iran sponsoring this decision on missiles, and without any response by members of this body. Therefore, Israel asked for a vote, to stop this hypocrisy, and voted against this decision.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

EOV- L.58 - “Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices”

Mr. Chairperson,

The ability of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty to address proliferation challenges, including non-compliance by states with their international obligations in the nuclear domain, is questionable.

This holds especially true for the Middle East where several states have an exceptionally poor track record of compliance with their non-proliferation obligations.

It has been Israel’s long standing position that the notion of a FMCT should be part of a new consensual regional security architecture, the essential prerequisites for which are far from being fulfilled.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

EOV - L.26 – “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty”

Mr. Chairperson,

Israel voted in favor of resolution L.26 titled "Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty" in light of its longstanding support of the Treaty, which we signed in 1996.

Since the establishment of the Preparatory Commission of the CTBT, Israel has actively participated in the development of all elements of the Treaty's verification regime. Israel transmits data from its certified seismic stations to the International Data Center, and actively participates in various relevant activities. Israel's significant support and involvement in the substantive work of the CTBTO PrepCom is consonant with the importance it attributes to this Treaty, and recognition of its contribution to the enhancement of international peace and security. In that vein, Israel co-sponsored UNSC 2310 adopted on 2016.

Mr. Chairperson,

Notwithstanding Israel's favorable attitude towards the Treaty, as outlined earlier, we were unable to support the language contained in L.26 in its entirety, in particular preamble paragraph 7 and operative paragraphs 1 and 6.

Preamble paragraph 7 inserts into a resolution dealing with the CTBT, references from the NPT and its review conference. While both treaties are in the nuclear domain, they are different in their subject matter, scope, obligations and membership. In accordance with international law, decisions and resolutions taken in the context of one forum cannot be injected into the work of the other without the latter's explicit consent.

With regards to OP1 and OP6, it should be noted that the completion of the verification regime is a prerequisite for entry into force (EIF) of the Treaty, in accordance with the stipulation of article IV(1). It also constitutes a major consideration for ratification for Israel. While significant progress has been made in the development of the CTBT verification regime, further efforts are still required.

Mr. Chairperson,

The regional security situation in the Middle East, including adherence to and compliance with the Treaty by states in the region, is another major consideration for ratification for Israel.

Another significant consideration for ratification is Israel's equal status in the policy making organs of the Treaty's Organization. The fact that the MESA regional group, defined in Annex 1 of the Treaty, has been paralyzed for nearly 20 years is an inexcusable situation that must be resolved.

I thank you.

EOV - L.8 – “The Arms Trade Treaty” // L.63 – “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”

Madam Chairperson,

I would like to exercise my right to deliver an EOV before the vote on L.8 OP.9 and L.63. PP.7 and Op.6:

Israel stated in the 3rd RevCon of the UNPoA on SALW that we do not consider the UNPoA on SALW as the right venue for the issue of Ammunition, since another venue was already chosen for it, the GGE in 2020, and voted against the relevant paragraphs in the outcome document.

Therefore, we cannot support language that welcomes all the outcome document of the 3rd RevCon.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.

EOV - L.35 – “Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures”

Madam Chairperson,

I would like to exercise my right to deliver an EOV before the vote on L.35 PP.9:

Israel stated in the 3rd RevCon of the UNPoA on SALW that we do not consider the UNPoA on SALW as the right venue for the issue of Ammunition, since another venue was already chosen for it, the GGE in 2020, and voted against the relevant paragraphs in the outcome document.

Therefore, we cannot support language that welcomes all the outcome document of the 3rd RevCon.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.

EOV - L.30 – “Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region”

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

Israel asked for a vote on paragraphs OP2 and OP5, as they do not reflect truly the reality in the Middle East.

On OP2 – Peace in the Mediterranean is the ultimate goal of the State of Israel, but this one dimensional paragraph is misleading: there is no mentioning of the ongoing use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime; there is no mentioning of the ongoing missile proliferation by the Iranian regime; there is no mentioning of the unleashed terror by the Iranian Regime; there is no mentioning of the radical Islamic groups and Non State Actors that terrorizing the whole region, including the Mediterranean.

This resolution legitimizes the atrocities that are perpetuated in our region, as well as dangerous proliferation. The message here is that 800,000 dead in Syria are "OK", ISIS terrorism in the M.E. is "OK", Hezbollah terrorizing all of Lebanon and now Syria too is "OK", terror from the Middle East to Europe is "OK".

On OP5 – Israel believes that joining arms control treaties is not an aim or a goal by itself, because they are useless if countries do not obey by them or if they do not actually solve regional issues. Israel believes that the most important element is for the right conditions to be established, creating trust and confidence, security and mutual recognition. Without these conditions, it is a falsified illusion that dooms for failure.

Israel believes that it is time to face the reality as it is.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.