



STATEMENT

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Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on being elected President of the General Conference. My delegation is confident that under your guidance this important Conference will reach full success. I wish to assure you the full cooperation of my delegation in carrying out your highly responsible task.

The opening of the General Conference coincides with the Jewish New Year, the year 5769, which begins this evening.

The Jewish New Year starts with ten-day period of reflection and profound introspection. I wish to extend to all delegates and to all IAEA staff my delegation wishes for a Happy New Year, with the hope that this year will bring with it achievements in all IAEA-related fields.

I also wish to congratulate the new members of the Agency, the Sultanate of Oman, the kingdom Lesotho, and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. President,

The nuclear industry has recently begun witnessing the emergence of a world-wide renaissance. Countries the world over are experiencing a steep rise in energy demands in general and in electricity consumption in particular.

This growth, coupled with the rising trend of oil prices and growing demand for environment friendly energy sources, has served to make nuclear energy more attractive.

Whereas the intensive development of nuclear energy is highly desirable, there is a clear need to minimize proliferation risks associated with nuclear fuel cycle technologies which are inherently dual use.

With the universal recognition that countries have the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, comes the absolute duty of each state to fully honor its international non-proliferation obligations and commitments.

The most practical approach to minimize proliferation risks is to supply nuclear reactors as a power producing "black box", along with sale of the fuel for the entire lifetime of the reactors, and a scheme for "take-back" of the spent fuel by the supplier. In this context, we welcome the fact that the issue of assurance of fuel supply has been placed on the global agenda, and that the IAEA and others are investing efforts in facilitating dialogue on this crucial topic.

Mr. President,

The continuous growth of Israel's energy needs coupled with its total dependence on foreign energy sources poses a national multifaceted challenge. Israel possesses advanced nuclear expertise and know-how that could play an important role when it comes to the future shaping of Israel's energy sources and needs. In this regard it should be pointed out that Israel attaches great importance to the nuclear non-proliferation

regime although experience has shown that NPT applicability in the Middle East is at best, limited. In recent years, Israel has brought itself even closer to the regime, including in the field of export controls through a robust legislation. Israel therefore welcomes IAEA's Director General statement in the Board of Governors on last June which calls on member states to bring Non-NPT member States closer to the regime. In this spirit we welcome the US-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative and its endorsement by the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Mr. President,

In January 1993 the Israeli Cabinet has approved a vision of the long-term goals for Middle East Regional Security and Arms Control. Israel's vision calls inter-alia to the states of the region to jointly establish in the Middle East a mutually verifiable zone free of ground-to ground missiles, of chemical biological and nuclear weapons.

Fifteen years later Israel has not lost hope that states of the region will some day jointly embrace a multi-lateral cooperative dialogue for the same.

Regrettably, in recent years we have been witnessing significant and dangerous developments regarding nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Some countries have been developing clandestine nuclear programs in total disregard of their legal international obligations and commitments and contrary to their stated policy. The activities of these countries are currently under intensive IAEA investigation.

The State of Israel and others are following these developments with great concern. Israel calls upon those countries to comply with their

obligations and commitments and to halt their military oriented nuclear activities. Israel hopes that the IAEA investigation will get to the bottom of these activities and in so doing will assist the international community in its efforts to stem and prevent dangerous proliferation of nuclear weapons and the abuse of the right to nuclear energy.

One of the most critical elements of the international non-proliferation effort is the implementation of an effective and timely inspection process. We believe that it is crucial to improve and enhance the IAEA verification and inspection capabilities and we therefore welcome U.S DOE/NNSA New Generation Safeguards Initiative launched earlier this month as an important building block in a complex structure.

Mr. President,

Along side non-proliferation, safety and security remain the main challenges to the international community and the nuclear power industry. Adequate safety and physical security measures, as well as national regulatory regimes, are also crucial to ensure international acceptance of nuclear power.

It has been the steadfast policy of the IAEC to pursue uncompromising standards of safety in Israel's nuclear centers: Soreq Nuclear Research Center and the Nuclear Research Center Negev. IAEC has applied safety measures and guidelines in accordance with the IAEA safety requirements, guidelines and Codes of Conduct (COC). IAEC safety measures and guidelines are also assisted by those set by U.S Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Israeli scientists contribute regularly to

the work of IAEA in this field and to the drafting of the Agency's documents and reports.

The National Radiation Protection Center (NRPC) at Soreq NRC is Israel's prime center for licensing and safety issues related to protection against ionizing and non-ionizing radiation.

Mr. President,

In a world of transnational terrorist networks and supporting rogue regimes, in a world where a secret and sudden attack with CBRN weapons can become a chilling reality, none of us can confront this global threat alone.

The unprecedented surge in the global demand for nuclear energy and technology makes our common task to prevent the availability of nuclear and radioactive materials to terrorists, more urgent. No effort should be spared in denying these materials.

In this spirit Israel has joined since April 2007 the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) as an active member. As such, we plan to host in Israel in 2009 a GICNT activity on related technological or legal aspects. We also commend the IAEA for addressing the topic of preventing illicit trafficking of radioactive and nuclear materials.

In this respect I would like to add that Israel has joined the Megaport initiative led by the US Department of Energy and is in the process of installing Megaport portals at points of entry to the country to ensure that

illicit trafficking of radioactive and nuclear materials are either deterred or intercepted.

Mr. President,

I would like to express Israel's appreciation for the Agency's assistance provided to member states through its Technical Cooperation programs both nationally and regionally.

In the last national Technical Cooperation cycle we have been working hand in hand with the Agency and other member states to extend the benefits of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy in the areas of health, agriculture, environment and industry to more member states within and outside our region.

In response to yet another IAEC initiative the State of Israel has recently joined the International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycle (INPRO) as an observer. Following an internal comprehensive review, we have identified several INPRO Collaborative Projects to which Israeli scientists can effectively contribute. We will also consider, in due course, joining this important initiative as a member.

Mr. President,

Compliance with legally binding non-proliferation commitments is the most basic confidence building measure that is vital for the creation of conditions that would facilitate the process of turning the Middle East into a zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Allow me to recall that three out of the four widely recognized cases of non-compliance with legally binding non-proliferation obligations which the IAEA Director General has mentioned this morning, have taken place in the Middle East by states which are parties to the NPT.

Unfortunately, instead of tackling Middle East real non-compliance and proliferation pressing issues, some countries are trying to impose on this august body agenda item 21 on the so-called "Israeli Nuclear Capabilities".

This agenda item is no more than a version of an agenda item that was removed in 1993 and never acted upon since, entitled "Israel Nuclear Threats and Capabilities";

Among sponsors of this draft resolution are states which openly, even at the highest international fora, do not recognize the state of ISRAEL and even call for its annihilation. What moral standing possess sponsors of this agenda item who do not recognize Israel's right to exist while criticizing Israeli policies aiming at securing its very existence?

Mr. President,

Agenda Item No. 20 titled "Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East", deals mainly with the establishment of the Middle East as a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.

As I previously mentioned we remain committed to our vision of a Middle East developing into a zone free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons as well as ballistic missiles.

It is obvious that the Middle East cannot be different from other regions when it comes to basics of international relations. A Nuclear Weapon Free Zone cannot be advanced out of context. It can only emerge gradually from a process of mutual acceptance, reconciliation and lasting peace, followed by more confidence building measures and modest arms control measures.

Establishing a Middle East free of WMD constitutes an important part of our own vision for the region. Israel has therefore joined consensus on resolutions on this Item for many consecutive years. We have done so despite our grave reservations about modalities included in the text of the resolution as well as about the relevance of this forum in addressing this issue.

Unfortunately, since 2006, for the first time after 14 consecutive years, consensus on this resolution was lost due to the insistence of its sponsors to introduce non-negotiated language and changes of the resolution. By so doing, the sponsors have further distanced the text from anything that Israel can accept. It therefore raises doubts whether the promotion of the Middle East into a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone is indeed the aiming of the sponsors. It is not too late to reach consensus among all member states on this Agenda Item.

My delegation appreciated efforts by various delegations to reinstate a consensus on the Middle East "Package". I can assure our full cooperation in trying to reach consensus which must be based on negotiations in good faith.

Mr. President,

IAEA objectives and mandate should guide us all. The state of Israel is looking forward to the strengthening of the IAEA in fulfilling the mission it is entrusted with in an era of critical challenges. My delegation has full confidence in you Mr. President, all distinguished delegations the Director General of the IAEA and the Secretariat in bringing this Annual Conference to a fruitful conclusion.

Thank you Mr. President.