

# ISRAEL

Statement by:

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**United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation  
in the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit  
Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in all its Aspects**

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Thank you Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me on behalf of the Delegation of Israel to congratulate you as well as the members of the bureau on assuming your duties to chair this important meeting. We wish to assure you of Israel's full cooperation and assistance in bringing this Review Conference to a successful outcome under your leadership.

The UN Programme of Action of July 2001 has made a significant contribution to international arms control efforts in the past few years, and has raised the issue of illicit trade in SALW as a higher priority. More and more states are aware today of the urgent necessity to apply enhanced standards of control over small arms and light weapons. Many surplus small arms and light weapons are being destroyed and standards related to marking and record keeping as well as tracing illicit SALW have now become globally accepted. The increased awareness to the humanitarian consequences of illicit trade in SALW has also resulted in giving special attention to certain types of light weapons, particularly MANPADS.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN POA encourages regional activities and cooperation in order to better implement its provisions, and indeed different regions have acted accordingly by consolidating their efforts to combat illicit trade in SALW. This represents another achievement attributed to the POA and the international community should praise and encourage more of such activities. However, we note that these achievements have not yet materialized in the Middle East nor have illicit transfers in SALW been reduced in the region. Israel, which continues to suffer from terrorism, is profoundly concerned by the fact that small arms and light weapons are still available to terrorist groups in our region. Small arms and light weapons trafficking to terrorist groups is being carried out, some due to incompetence and lack of adequate controls, others by turning a blind eye to these transfers, and unfortunately some of these illicit transfers are allowed and even encouraged by certain states. In our view, the main challenge to the implementation of the UN POA in the Middle East remains the lack of political willingness to act decisively to prevent illicit transfers and to apply the POA provisions towards that end.

Illicit SALW in the hands of terrorists in the region is the major source of concern and poses as a grave risk to human security. Israel is convinced that the UN POA can and must contribute to changing this terrible reality. By now, five years after the adoption of the Programme of Action, the international community must make it a priority to block the transfer of small arms and light weapons to terrorist groups. This pursuit is paramount should the UN Programme of Action seek relevance in the Middle East. Nothing can justify terrorism. Nothing can justify the practice by some states of condemning terrorism and yet condoning the transfer of SALW to terrorist groups. We must make this critical issue our priority.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN POA was designed to achieve a significant task, namely to prevent and eradicate illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects. The international community mandated this conference to find the effective means to reduce the humanitarian

devastations caused by illicit trade in SALW. We therefore believe that the best approach to achieve that end would focus specifically on the illicit aspects of the arms trade. As much as Israel appreciates the need to apply comprehensive export control standards on arms trade, which are guided by political and ideological agendas, we nevertheless believe that if these standards are not conducive to illicit trade, they exceed the scope of the mandate and purpose of the UN POA. Our delegation stands ready to work together to identify those standards for transfer control that will effectively reduce illicit trade of SALW. Such standards could include the implementation of the marking and tracing instrument, full compliance with UN Security Council arms embargos, the assessment of the risk of diversion to illicit end-users, a ban on the transfer of MANPADS to non-state actors, satisfactory management and control of stockpiles, etc.

Israel wishes also to express its concern over the growing number of individuals from different nationalities that are conducting arms trade without proper authorization. We welcome the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts and look forward to its successful outcome. We have full confidence that the group will manage to identify measures to address the problem of unauthorized brokers.

Mr. Chairman,

The terrorist attack in Mombassa in November 2002, when terrorists fired Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) at an Israeli civilian aircraft carrying more than a hundred passengers, highlights the problem of MANPADS falling into the hands of terrorists. Although MANPADS are widely recognized as a legitimate means of defense for states, they are attractive to terrorist organizations and could have a devastating impact if used against civil aviation. MANPADS are easily obtained and operated, relatively cheap, and have a massive potential impact. They can therefore be easily identified as *weapon of mass effect* in view of their unique characteristics. The international community should therefore apply special treatment to the issue of MANPADS. The UN register has already acknowledged MANPADS as a unique type of weapon system by adding it as a subcategory to the reporting requirements. Moreover, UN first committee resolution on MANPADS, 60/77, sponsored by Australia, underlined the need to apply measures to ensure that these weapons are not directly or indirectly transferred to terrorists or other non-state actors. But our efforts must not stop with these developments – the significance of this issue requires us to do more. We believe that UN POA provides an appropriate framework for this action.

For its part, the government of Israel has incorporated the Wassenaar guidelines on the transfer of MANPADS into its export control regulations. In addition, as a contribution to the ongoing efforts to address this threat, our government hosted a meeting in Jerusalem last April of more than thirty experts from different regions in the world. We intend to continue to work together with other interested states in order to find methods to enhance the implementation of existing international instruments and standards relating to MANPADS.

Mr. Chairman,

Part II of the POA outlines a list of measures to be applied by states to reduce illicit trade in SALW. As a country that produces and exports small arms and light weapons, Israel is particularly sensitive to the need to ensure that they are not being diverted to the wrong hands. In accordance with the relevant provisions of the UN POA, Israel's legislation requires licensing for any activity related to small arms and light weapons. Israel complies with the UN POA and instrument on marking and tracing of illicit SALW, which was adopted last year.

Against a backdrop of the daily reality of terrorism and illicit transfers to terrorist groups in our region, the government of Israel is determined to reduce the number of handguns in private ownership. As one measure, Israel has enacted more strenuous licensing criteria for civilian possession of handguns and their ammunition. Today, we can note that the number of civilian-owned handguns has been reduced by one-third, and we expect a greater drop in the future.

In order to ensure that all exported small arms and light weapons are delivered to legitimate end-users, the government of Israel is stringently monitoring these transfers. Israel's firm arms transfer policy includes strict controls aimed, *inter alia*, at the prohibition of exports to regions or states under United Nations Security Council sales embargo, non-state entities, subversive and underground movements, terrorist or guerrilla groups, criminal organizations or areas of ongoing internal armed conflict between rival parties. In the last few months Israel has begun a process of reforming its export control legislation. Future legislation is intended to incorporate the Wassenaar lists and include additional provisions relating to arms brokering, thus aligning Israel export control standards with the highest standards in this regard

In conclusion Mr. Chairman,

While addressing the issue of arms control and in particular SALW, we tend to focus on the arms themselves, using statistics and figures. Let us remember that behind the figures exist names of individuals, dear to their families and friends, who died or were injured as a result of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons. The devastations of illicit trade are clearly humanitarian, and while addressing the issue these individuals must be kept at the forefront of our attention. Jewish sages gave us a great lesson by telling us that *saving one single live is considered as if saving an entire world*. We are guided by this moral imperative and we owe such efforts to the victims of illicit trade in SALW. Israel stands ready to contribute to the successful outcome of this review.

Thank you