

FIRST COMMITTEE

New York, 26 October 2004

The Establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East

**Explanation of Vote by Mr. Alon Bar Director of Arms Control
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem**

Mr. Chairman,

Israel joined the consensus on resolution A/C.1/59/L8 entitled "The Establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East" as it has done for over twenty years, notwithstanding substantive and important reservations regarding certain elements in the resolution. Mr. Chairman, The policy of Israel has always maintained that the nuclear issue as well as all regional security issues, conventional and non-conventional, should be dealt within the context of the peace process.

Israel supports the eventual establishment of a mutually verifiable NWFZ in the Middle East that should also be free of Chemical Biological weapons as well as ballistic missiles.

Israel believes that the political realities in the Middle East mandate a practical step-by-step approach. This should begin with modest CBM's followed by the establishment of peaceful relations and reaching reconciliation, and possibly, complemented by conventional and non-conventional arms control measures. This process could eventually lead to more ambitious goals, such as establishing a Nuclear Weapons Free zone.

As the international community has recognized, the establishment of a NWFZ should be based on arrangements freely arrived at among all the states in the region concerned. Israel believes that such a zone can only be established through direct negotiations between the states in the region, after they have recognize each other and have established full peaceful and diplomatic relations between them. It cannot be established in situations where some of the states maintain that they are in a state of war with each other, refuse in principle to maintain peaceful relations with Israel or even recognize its right to exist.

In this context it should be recalled that in the Middle East, unlike other regions in the world where nuclear weapons free zones have been established, there are continuing threats in the region and beyond against the very existence of one state, Israel. These threats are multiplied by the reckless behavior of some states concerning the export of WMD related technologies and the discrepancies between the commitments of those states and their actual behavior. These circumstances and the acknowledged record of non-compliance with international obligations by certain states have a critical impact on the regions ability to embark on a joint process of regional security building that could eventually lead to a NWFZ in the ME.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel has recently reiterated its vision of promoting regional peace and stability that should facilitate among other things the eventual establishment of a Middle East NWFZ. at the same time Israel made it clear that it harbors no illusions that progress towards realizing this vision can be made without a fundamental change in regional circumstances, not least in the attitude of states in the region toward Israel. We thus propose that our current efforts be directed at learning from the experience of other regions about the prerequisites for making progress in this area. In our view efforts in the context of this resolution should be focused on the creation of a stable environment of peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. Israel will continue to dedicate all its efforts to achieve this goal. We call upon our neighbors to do the same.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.