Statement by
Ms. Michal Sehayek Soroka
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel

Thematic Discussion on Conventional Weapons
First Committee of the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly

Unites Nations, New-York
October 2014

(Check Against Delivery)
Mr. Chairperson,

Israel is deeply concerned regarding the developments in the Middle East and beyond, where terrorist organizations and non-state actors acquire, smuggle and possess weapons in quantities and qualities that sometimes exceed arsenals acquired by sovereign independent states. It is worrying that terrorist organizations have at their disposal weapons such as short and medium range rockets and missiles, MANPADS, UAVs and even top of the line shore to sea missiles. These weapons contribute to the destabilization of the region, are used intentionally primarily against civilians and constitute grave humanitarian concerns. Their proliferation to entities that have little or no regard for acceptable standards of behavior or legally binding international obligations, threaten communities and sovereign states alike.

Countering this threat is a task that requires resolve, cooperation and a concerted effort by the international community at large, through the development and implementation of UNSC resolutions, international norms and national tools and mechanisms. An important basis already exists in the form of UNSC resolutions taken under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, such as resolutions 1373 and 1747.

Mr. Chairperson,

The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, including the Marking and Tracing Instrument (ITI), contribute to combating the illicit trade and diversion of arms. It rightly focuses on the national, regional and international levels as the necessary approach to eradicate such trade. Unfortunately not all regions currently possess the mechanisms required to foster such essential cooperation and partnership. The Middle East, which serves as one of the most active hubs for arms smuggling and illicit transfers, has no regional forum in which the regional states can directly communicate with each other and have a dialogue on core issues that affect their security such as the illicit trade and proliferation of conventional arms, particularly with regard to terrorist organization and their state supporters.
Mr. Chairperson,

Israel welcomes the upcoming entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty in December this year. Israel played an active role in the development of this important instrument. We view this treaty as a significant achievement pursuant to the international community’s efforts to promote regulation of the trade in arms. The Treaty should bolster the efforts to minimize diversion of arms to unauthorized recipients. Israel is currently in the final stages of an internal review process that is considering the signature of this treaty. In any event, Israel will continue to exercise responsibility in the sale and transfer of arms and to maintain its robust export control system.

Mr. Chairperson,

Israel considers the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) a paramount instrument and forum in the regulation of the use of conventional weapons and in the achievement of the necessary balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations in the application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This forum is uniquely positioned to bring together all relevant players, including users and producers of munitions, and thus decisions undertaken in this forum have the distinct benefit of having a real and significant impact on the ground and in the prevention or mitigation of unnecessary suffering during armed conflict. Israel welcomes the work undertaken this year in the CCW on the issue of future Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) by the informal meeting of experts, as well as the continued work on IEDs. Both issues merit further study in the context of the CCW.

Mr. Chairperson,

The threat of MANPADS has been clearly demonstrated in recent years. These cases serve as imperative reminders as to why these weapons should not reach the hands of terrorists and non-state actors and why they should only be in the hands of responsible sovereign states under appropriate stockpile management arrangements. The transfer of such weapons to non-state actors has the potential to cause grave tragedies with harsh consequences mainly, but not limited to, the civilian population. This issue warrants closer and more immediate examination by the UN First Committee. It is crucial that every effort is taken to prevent any illicit use or transfer of these weapons before any reprehensible and avoidable tragedies occur.

Thank you.