**Israel denounces NPT 'hypocrisy' as Iran hails accord**

By Gavin Rabinowitz

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*http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g3v3Ub4BwaRwmxGy3aEFfDWmvOeA*

TORONTO — Israel Saturday denounced as "hypocritical" a resolution adopted by the Non-Proliferation Treaty's 189 nations and said it would refuse to take part in a conference on a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East.

Israel said the resolution adopted at the United Nations on Friday singles out the Jewish state and fails to mention arch-foe Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"This resolution is deeply flawed and hypocritical. It ignores the realities of the Middle East and the real threats facing the region and the entire world," said a statement released in Toronto by the Israeli government, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Canada.

"It singles out Israel, the Middle East's only true democracy and the only country threatened with annihilation," said the statement from Israel, believed to be the region's sole if undeclared nuclear power.

"Given the distorted nature of this resolution, Israel will not be able to take part in its implementation," it said.

Iran, which is suspected of trying to acquire atomic bombs, welcomed the document from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatories that proposed new steps towards disarmament.

The agreement reached Friday at the 2010 NPT review conference called for a regional conference in 2012 to advance the goal of a nuclear-free Middle East.

The accord specifically mentions "the importance of Israel's accession to the treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards."

But it failed to make similar reference to other nations including India and Pakistan that, like Israel, are non-members of the treaty and are either known or believed to possess nuclear weapons.

President Barack Obama said Friday he supported the document's goals, but he criticized the agreement for its focus on Israel.

"We strongly oppose efforts to single out Israel, and will oppose actions that jeopardize Israel's national security," he said.

The text also made no mention of Iran, which faces a new round of United Nations sanctions over its refusal to halt uranium enrichment as part of a nuclear program that many in the international community fear masks a nuclear weapons drive. Tehran says the program is for civilian nuclear energy only.

Iran's IAEA representative Ali Asghar Soltanieh told state news agency IRNA that the United States, despite opposing the text on Israel, would have to fall in line with other countries.

"The US reservation is symbolic and it is obliged to go along with the world's request, which is that Israel must join the NPT and open its installations to IAEA inspectors," he said.

The document came after a month of deliberations that looked set to fail until almost the very last hour, with Israel's arch-foe Iran seeking tougher anti-Israeli language.

EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton praised the deal, and said the European Union would "immediately engage in the preparation of its contribution to the process for the implementation of the Middle East resolution."

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner also expressed reservations about the accord for not being more "inclusive... particularly on the Iranian crisis which is the focus of the international community's concerns."

Israel is widely believed to have nuclear weapons, but maintains a policy of refusing to deny or acknowledge its nuclear arsenal.

The NPT decision would not change Israeli policy.

"Our (nuclear) policy is well known, well understood and rock solid," said a senior official travelling with Netanyahu.

The prime minister is expected to discuss the accord with Obama during talks at the White House on Tuesday.

Israeli officials welcomed the statement from Obama and clarifications from other senior US officials that the conference on a Middle East free of nuclear arms would not take place without Israeli consent.

Still, Israel had been hoping the US would have prevented the agreement in the first place and officials had been in close, constant contact with the US in the run up to the vote.

The Israeli official refrained from criticizing the US failure ahead of Tuesday's meeting, but conceded that "the American administration has changed its policy on non proliferation."

"We have not finished discussing this subject. We haven't heard the last on this subject," the official said.

Israel's normally strong ties with the United States have been shaken in recent months by a rare public row over Israeli settlement building, which Washington said harmed its peace efforts.