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To the United Nations, Geneva

Statement on Item 7
11th General Session
Human Rights Council

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Mr. President.

This is the last session of the Council that you are chairing as the President. Allow me to begin by recalling the strength of your candid leadership the last twelve months. We applaud the manner in which you have conducted the business of the Council and how your approach induced a spirit of cooperation even in the most trying of times. On behalf of Israel, I express our deepest respect, gratitude and appreciation.

Mr. President,

After hearing yesterday morning's statements, we must express concern that the overwhelming consensus is that this conflict seems only to have one party. Not once was the fate of the innocent civilians living in southern Israel brought to the attention of this Council. Just this weekend alone there were two unprovoked rocket attacks that wreaked havoc in the regions of Ashkelon and Sdot Negev. Yet this Council remains silent.

If this Council wants Israel to take it seriously, then it must show some understanding and solidarity with the suffering and concerns of the Israeli people. I said it once, and I'll say it again. Ignoring Palestinian violence against Israel, and the denial of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish State, detracts from any credibility this Council may have, and certainly does not contribute to building Israel's confidence in the Council.

Mr. President,

In a portion of the Torah, from the book of Leviticus, which Jews all around the world will read in Synagogues this week, appears the story of the 12 spies, the first Israelites to enter the land of Israel over 3000 years ago. Later we will read about the battle that took place between the Israelites and the other nations. One of the striking features of this battle is that when the Israelites went into war, they were commanded to carry the holy ark of the covenant containing the 10 commandments before them into battle. This was meant to act as a reminder that even in times of military conflict the people had to be led by some fundamental principles of law and morality.

No resolution of this Council adopted by the automatic majority of Arab countries and their supporters will change this basic truth.

Mr. President,

When Prime Minister Netanyahu addressed the Israeli nation this last Sunday he appealed to all Arab leaders "Let us meet. Let us speak of peace and let us make peace. I am ready to meet with you at any time. I am willing to go to Damascus, to Riyadh, to Beirut, to any place – including Jerusalem." A gesture quite similar to that of Anwar Sadat when he journeyed the hour from Cairo to Jerusalem to begin the process that resulted in signing of the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty; an hour that changed the minds and hearts of those that witnessed it to one of hope.

We are willing to come to the table of bilateral negotiations. But as the Prime Minister said, "Even as we look toward the horizon, we must be firmly connected to reality, to the truth. And the simple truth is that the root

of the conflict was, and remains, the refusal to recognize the right of the Jewish people to a state of their own, in their historic homeland.”

We must stay firmly rooted in the truth. In the words of the Prime Minister “I have already stressed the first principle – recognition. Palestinians must clearly and unambiguously recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people. The second principle is: demilitarization. The territory under Palestinian control must be demilitarized with ironclad security provisions for Israel. [...] And here is the substance I now state clearly: If we receive this guarantee regarding demilitarization and Israel’s security needs, and if the Palestinians recognize Israel as the State of the Jewish people, then we will be ready in a future peace agreement to reach a solution where a demilitarized Palestinian state exists alongside the Jewish state.”

Israel’s willingness, together with the Palestinians, to work toward such a peace is a far-cry from the Syrian representative’s assertion last week that Israel’s intent is to destroy the Arab world and throw the Palestinians into the sea. Although we did appreciate the comic relief, let me reassure you, we do not intend to destroy the Arab world and we certainly do not intend to throw the Palestinians into the sea. If anything it reminds us of the Arab threat some years ago to destroy the state of Israel.

Mr. President,

Last month during his trip to Washington, the Palestinian President Mr. Abbas told the Washington Post, “I will wait for Hamas to accept

international commitments. I will wait for Israel to freeze settlements, [...] until then, in the West Bank, we have a good reality... the people are living a normal life.”

With all due respect, Mr. President, the Palestinian people in the West Bank have neither a normal life, nor a good reality. The same goes for Israelis. We all deserve a better life, a better reality.

We cannot afford to be passive. We must act now. In response to the reality of Palestinian life on the ground, which as I said, is not nearly as good as the Palestinian President’s representations, Prime Minister Netanyahu recently convened a Ministerial Committee whose purpose is to improve the situation of the Palestinian residents in the West Bank.

As for the Gaza Strip, on 11 June 2009, an Israeli construction team finished its work on a new pipeline for the transfer of fuel and natural gas from Israel to the Gaza Strip. Israel will continue to work in order to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. And in this regard I will repeat what I said in the first week of this session: Israel is not the only gateway for humanitarian goods and the keys of access to the Gaza Strip do not lie solely in the hands of Israel.

Mr. President,

In his Cairo speech that we all so greatly liked, the U.S. President saliently advocated "The Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems. Instead, it must be a cause for action, to help the Palestinian people develop the institutions that will sustain their state; to recognize Israel's legitimacy; and to choose progress over a self-defeating focus on the past."

We must choose a progress that will encompass the Arab world's recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people; a progress that will create the necessary infrastructure for the Palestinian people to prosper; and, a progress that will maintain peace and heal the divides of the past.

It is high time, Mr. President that this Council too will join this vision and start working toward peace.

Thank you.