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Special Rapporteur on Water and Sanitation

Right of Reply

Delivered by Mr. Brian E. Frenkel,
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The delegation of Israel regrets the fact that the representative of the Palestinian Authority once again chose to politicize an important thematic discussion, this time on water and sanitation.

Water scarcity is a problem faced by all the peoples of the region, including both Israelis and Palestinians. The way to tackle it is to find solutions, not to engage in a politicized blame game. The answer lies in the development of new sources of water, not simply in exhausting current ones.

Let me remind my colleague that the 1995 Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestinians includes a whole chapter dedicated to regulating water issues between the two sides. One of the important mechanisms put forth is the Joint Water Committee, or JWC, designed to help the two sides implement this agreement.

Over the years, the Palestinians have continuously breached this agreement by drilling a large number of unauthorized wells, and by failing to treat wastewater or develop new water sources, either through sewage treatment, or desalination. Unfortunately, the work of the JWC was suspended for several years.

The situation in Gaza, including in the area of water, is primarily the result of the ten year old rule of Hamas, a failed terrorist regime. Recently, this situation has been exacerbated by the current intra-Palestinian crises between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

Despite all that was mentioned, Israel has continued its efforts to promote the cooperation on the ground to provide for the needs of the population. In the beginning of this year a new agreement was reached in the water sector between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. And only last July another agreement was reached to provide desalinated water from the Red Sea-Dead Sea pilot project to the Palestinians.

These efforts reflect Israel's commitment to enhance the cooperation and find water solutions that benefit all the peoples of the region. We call on the Palestinians to show the same spirit.