Dear Colleagues, dear friends,

I want to thank you all sincerely for taking the time to attend my farewell reception.

When Israel’s Prime Minister sent me off to this post, he told me two things: my congratulations and my condolences. His farewell words embodied the duality and complexity of my role as the Permanent Representative to the IAEA and the CTBTO PrepCom.

It has been 6 incredibly interesting, rich and rewarding years, but at the same time challenging, and frustrating at times. Representing Israel in the multilateral arena is an inherently difficult task, given multiple biases and misconceptions, but in the nuclear domain it is even more so.

Israel is a tiny democratic country situated in a very tough neighborhood. We have no choice but to protect ourselves by ourselves, even when we are blessed with the support of great allies. Our tragic history as a Jewish nation is part and parcel of our collective sense of insecurity on one hand, and a strong sentiment of endurance and “never again” mindset on the other hand. This is where I came from when I defended Israeli interests in the IAEA and the CTBTO.

Becoming and Israeli Ambassador to the Agency and the CTBTO PrepCom at a relatively early stage of my career at the Israel Atomic Energy Commission was a dream come true. I took this role thinking I knew what it entails, but I learned **so** much during my term here. I learned that personalities matter greatly in diplomacy, and in this regard I thank you all for your cooperation, good working relations and friendship. Your willingness to listen with attention to our perspective on issues we don’t necessary share views on, helped me do my job better. I also want to take this opportunity to thank both the IAEA’s DG Amano and the CTBTO’s ES Zerbo, and their senior management, for the close and frank working relations, particularly during internationally challenging times.

During my term I also learned that it **is** possible to find common ground with people and nations who have very different interests and views, if we just listen to their perspective and get to the bottom of their concerns. Keeping an open mind and treating people respectfully are key to success. I tried to do that during my interactions with colleagues in Vienna, and I am thankful to those who kept an open mind and were willing to listen and consider our views.

I also learned that we all basically want the same thing: peaceful life and a good sense of security and stability. Understanding why some people feel they don’t have that, would help to better understand their positions, and their actions.

During my term I was obviously very much focused on Iran’s nuclear program. Dealing with such a significant challenge is unfortunately not unique to my term. My predecessors dealt with Iraq’s, Syria’s and Libya’s nuclear programs; and we all have dealt with the unfortunate so-called issue of “Israeli nuclear capabilities”, which has taken the region only backwards. Iran remains however the most significant threat to Israeli and regional security - a threat that Israel must take very seriously. This also means taking serious measures to counter Iran, simply because we have no choice. As I said in every IAEA Board meeting in the last 6 years, without trust and confidence there will be no better security for all of us in the region, and direct dialogue is the only way to advance those.

I must take this opportunity to thank my deputy, Ronen, who has been an extraordinary partner in the last 4 and a half years. Together, 2 non-diplomats from the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, we are the entire mission of Israel, and I could not have asked for a better deputy to fulfill our missions in Vienna. I thank you Ronen for your professionalism, dedication, wisdom and good advice. You really make a difference in Vienna.

I want to also take this opportunity to thank my exceptional husband, Eldad, who has been a solid support for me and our children, Oz and Omer. Without him, our family would not have survived those years so smoothly. I think we are all ready to go back home now.

I am going back to my home organization, the Atomic Energy Commission, but for the next two years I will be seconded to the Israel Defense Forces to serve as the Chief Instructor at the National Defense College. This will be a bit of a break for me from the nuclear issue, which I have been working on for nearly 20 years, but I certainly intend to be back working closely on these issues, which I find fascinating and so important.

Thank you all for your friendship and attention. It has been a great privilege and honor for me to work with you in the last years.

Allow me to raise a toast to cooperation and friendship, as we say in Hebrew–Lechaim – to Life. Cheers.

Bon appétit.