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Dr John Chipman, Director-General and Chief Executive, IISS

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for attending the concluding plenary session of this year's Manama Dialogue. The title covers some of the issues of putative core competence of the International Institute for Strategic Studies: Militias, Missiles and Nuclear Proliferation. Since 1958, the IISS has done a huge amount of work on nuclear proliferation. We have done an extraordinary amount of work just in the last couple of years on cruise-missile, drone and other missile proliferation, specifically in the Middle East.

And we were very proud, about 18 months or so ago, to produce a very thick, 280-page dossier on Iran's influence networks in the Middle East that attempted a typology of the various different types of relationships Iran enjoys with a number of other actors. The term proxies does not quite capture the diversity of relationships that Iran enjoys. And one of the implicit, nearly explicit conclusions of that evidence-based dossier was that Iran sees its influence network as a principal strategic asset, as important and possibly more important even than its nuclear-weapons programme or its missile programme, because it is that influence network that, day to day, is able to change the balance of power in the Middle East.

And implicit, certainly not an explicit conclusion of the dossier was that Iran's influence networks were something that would not easily be either sanctioned away or negotiated away, which poses a strategic dilemma for those who worry about the impact of those influence networks on the balance of power in the Middle East.

But to address these issues, we really have a fantastic concluding plenary. Let me introduce the persons in the order in which they will speak. Dr Eyal Hulata, who is a National Security Advisor of Israel; delighted to have him here and speaking in person at the Manama Dialogue. Brett McGurk, who has been at previous Manama Dialogues, now the Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa in the National Security Council of the United States. And our good friend Dr Nils Schmid, the spokesman for Foreign Policy of the SPD Party in Germany. And, I might say, full disclosure and transparency, also a person within the German parliament who was an animated supporter of the IISS proposal to put its Europe office in Berlin. We were delighted to open the IISS-Europe office in Berlin in September and he was one of four speakers from the German political spectrum who addressed us. So I want to thank you again, in the location of our Middle East office, for having supported the establishment of our IISS-Europe office in Berlin.

With that, could I invite Dr Eyal Hulata, the National Security Advisor of Israel, to address this Manama Dialogue.

Dr Eyal Hulata, National Security Advisor, Israel

Thank you, John. Dear delegates, participants and friends, I want to thank our Bahraini hosts and especially to His Majesty, the King and the Crown Prince, His Royal Highness Shaikh Salman for this remarkable event. Also, thanks to the IISS Manama Dialogue organisers, again, especially you, John.

It is my honour to be here and speaking to you on this occasion. I am happy to be in the panel with Dr Nils Schmid. Congratulations on the elections and good luck on your expected new role. I am sure that as we do today, we will have close collaboration in the future. Also here is a very close friend and

ally, Mr Brett McGurk, Deputy National Security Advisor to the US, always great to see and talk to you.

This is a unique opportunity for the leading designers of foreign and security policy from around the world to meet. For the last few days, we have met in large forums, bilateral sessions, exchanged views and perspectives on a large host of joint matters of concern, but also on mutual interests and opportunities. My participation here comes as we mark the first anniversary of the Abraham Accords with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Morocco, which joined Egypt and Jordan as partners of peace to Israel. These accords have been a clear message across the region that collaboration, innovation and optimistic vision are the best driving forces for the better future of our peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen, this panel is titled Militias, Missiles and Nuclear Proliferation; indeed, issues that Israel deals with at the top of our national security list of priorities. By and large, these are the means used by extreme regimes, sub-state organisations and individuals as they attempt to destabilise the region and prevent prosperity.

I start by that note because though Israel faces these threats on a daily basis from multiple fronts, we recognise that this is true for many of us. These threats are not driven by our own over-politicised issue of Israel's right for existence. They are at the root of all extreme ideologies, which strive to impose themselves on the rest of this region and other parts of the world. Indeed, they affect all of us present here today and other countries which seek progress.

Naturally, my contribution to this panel stems from Israel's continued struggle against the threats of Iran and its proxies. We are not alone in this struggle. Israel is indeed in the forefront, but so are our friends from Bahrain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. With all of us stands the United States of America; Secretary Austin yesterday laid down the US commitment to its allies and partners in the region. We, in Israel, feel that obligation every day. Israel's inclusion in CENTCOM is a symbol not only of our ironclad alliance with the United States but also of our acceptance by the region as a constructive defence partner.

The United States and Israel have, for years, been strategic partners in coping with Iran. We may not agree on everything, but we share the goals of preventing Iran from ever being able to break out nuclear weapons and to limit their regional domination.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are at a critical point in time on several fronts as it comes to Iran. And I am hopeful that we come out strong and successful. This is a public venue. Much of these issues should be left for closed rooms and private conversations, but there is merit in expressing publicly what we all know and understand. Iran is currently the most destabilising force in the region. From the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, from the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean, Iran and its proxies continuously threatened civilian life and feed on chaos in failed states.

Iran deployed proxies on our borders, sponsored militias around the Gulf and elsewhere as agents. It engages in terrorist attacks to attack those who object to its regime – the attack on the Aramco facilities in Saudi Arabia, on Emirati ships, on the Mercer Street, and recently the attempted assassination of the Prime Minister of Iraq. All of those attacks executed by Iran or by its proxies were carried out by missiles and drones. This has been a tremendous force build-up effort by Iran in recent years. They call them defence capabilities, but clearly that is false. While the Iranian people are

suffering through an economic crisis, Iran invests vast sums in development and manufacturing of weapons aimed to threaten and hurt its neighbours.

But by far, at the top of the list of threats is nuclear proliferation. Nuclear proliferation is a strategic threat for all of us. Iran has been aspiring to achieve nuclear-weapons capabilities for decades and paused only when it was faced by determination.

We have been speaking about malign activity of Iran throughout the region. Think how much bolder and dangerous it will be with a nuclear umbrella. Should Iran achieve its nuclear ambitions, the region as we know it is no longer. The free world will face extreme threats it has not faced before, with the new nuclear armouries and the collapse of the existing non-proliferation regime.

This is our time to deliver a strong and unified message. We will never allow Iran to go nuclear. We should recognise that Iran is stalling and will continue to draw more concessions unless we show unified determination. And then we can achieve our goals.

On this note, we need unified determination on other issues as well. There are not only threats in the region. There are many opportunities. You see, this is our neighbourhood and it is our responsibility to make the best out of what we have. We need to continue working on our sustainable joint defence architecture. I suggest that we develop this concept in our bilateral and multilateral forums.

Opportunities are not only in defence. I want to share with you here that from here I fly to the UAE to join Israel's Minister of Energy, who will be signing a declaration of intent with her Jordanian counterpart, the Minister of Water and Irrigation, to build a large solar field in Jordan to supply us with electricity, and in parallel to that to build a desalination plant in Israel to supply fresh water to the Kingdom of Jordan.

The Abraham Accords are the enabler of such an important agreement to promote the national security of both of our countries. The government of Israel led by Prime Minister Bennett was founded six months ago. During this time, the issues that I spoke about today, both mitigating threats and harnessing opportunities, have been at the cornerstone of the decision-making process. As the Prime Minister says, Israel was founded on the basis of doing good and being strong, and I believe that this is a good message to us all here today. Thank you.

Dr John Chipman, Director-General and Chief Executive, IISS

Thank you very much. And I hope during the discussion, we can enter into a little bit more detail about what could be meant by a sustainable joint defence architecture in this region.