PM Netanyahu's Remarks at the Start of the Weekly Cabinet Meeting

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Prime Minister’s Office

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the start of the weekly Cabinet meeting, made the following remarks:

"A Hamas tunnel has recently been discovered under two schools in the Gaza Strip. Hamas is using schoolchildren as human shields and this is the enemy that we have been fighting against for many years, an enemy that is committing a twofold war crime. On the one hand, it first attacks innocent civilians and then hides behind children. On Friday I instructed the Foreign Ministry Director General to file an official protest against Hamas at the UN Security Council.

Last week I met with US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley. I thanked her, on your behalf as well, for her sharp words in favor of the State of Israel and against the anti-Israel obsession at the UN. I told her that the time has come for the UN to reconsider the continued existence on UNRWA.

Since World War Two, there have been – and continue to be today – millions of refugees. And these millions have the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), while most of the Palestinian refugees are settled and have a separate commission. This is UNRWA; it has its own institutions and considerable incitement against Israel. I regret that UNRWA, to a large degree, by its very existence, perpetuates – and does not solve – the Palestinian refugee problem. Therefore, the time has come to disband UNRWA and integrate it into the UNHCR.

As part of our efforts and actions to improve home front emergency preparedness, we are beginning today a national earthquake exercise, called "Earthquake 2017". So first of all, I hope there will not be an earthquake in 2017. There are enough earthquakes around us in all senses of the word, but we live adjacent to the Syrian-African rift, and an earthquake can hit at any moment. They already have and they undoubtedly will. The more prepared we are, the better we will be able to deal with such an incident and thus reduce harm to life and property. I ask the public to follow the exercise instructions. If I had to summarize the approach in the case of an earthquake, in contrast to other scenarios that threaten the home front, the basic rule is: Get out of the houses, get out of the buildings. The safest place is open space.

Today the Cabinet will hold its biannual discussion on progress in controlling the state budget in the coming years. We have determined a rule, the 'numerator' rule. I thank the Finance Minister and other ministries, but you Mr. Finance Minister, that we have been partners on this important issue. What is the numerator rule? It says that there are no blank checks, and this is a well-known rule, but we have known this rule for two years. We set a budget and we are committed to working within the budget. We set a bi-annual budget, but the Government is constantly making budgetary decisions for years, for more than two years, and thus we determine budgetary commitments that are very hard for us to meet afterwards. The numerator rule says that we also include long-range commitments in the budgetary framework.

This is a radical change in how the Government works; not many countries have it, and this places Israel among the handful of the world's leading countries in terms of fiscal and budgetary management. I think that this discussion expresses the fact that the Israeli economy is not only free, vibrant and productive, it is also administered well, and this is very important. And again, I very much appreciate your cooperation Mr. Finance Minister and that of your ministry, and our joint work in order to broadcast this responsibility to the world. This is effective; we see the results.

Today we will approve a national digital plan. We are harnessing the digital revolution to reducing gaps, fostering economic growth and improving service to citizens. This also has many other aspects and is crucial to a prosperous and advanced future."