Israel blocks Palestinian bid to get observer status at UN disarmament panel

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Israel on Monday thwarted the Palestinians’ attempt to obtain observer state status at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament (CD).

At the first public plenary of the CD’s 2019 session, 33 states were granted observer status, “while the Palestinian bid was the only one to be rejected, denying yet another Palestinian attempt to politicize the work of professional international organizations,” the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem said in statement Tuesday.

Israel is one of the Geneva-based organization’s 65 member states.

The Palestinian bid was supported by Iran, Turkey, North Korea and Venezuela, but Israeli diplomats in Jerusalem and missions across the world, “in close coordination with the US,” managed to block the move, according to the ministry.

“This is another Palestinian attempt to politicize professional UN bodies and international agencies,” the statement read.

Ramallah had also tried to attain observer state status for CD’s 2018 session, but Israel and the US thwarted that effort as well.

“Israel believes that the Conference on Disarmament continues to have an important role to play in the multilateral arms control domain and will continue to take a constructive approach towards its work,” said Aviva Raz-Schechter, Israel’s ambassador to the UN agencies based in Geneva.

“The CD is a professional forum for negotiation and Israel, together with others, will object any attempt to politicize this forum.”

Founded in 1979 as “the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community,” the CD initially had 40 members. Today, it has 65 member states, but annually invites non-members to “to take part in its work,” according to the conference’s [website](https://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/(httpPages)/6286395D9F8DABA380256EF70073A846?OpenDocument).

In 2018, 45 non-member states [participated](https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/385DEA6CD8E7D677C12582D4004910CD/$file/List+of+non-Member+States+2018+.pdf) in the conference’s session.

Also on Monday, an Israeli diplomat was elected vice-chair of the UN Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, a standing committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Nadav Yesod was elected by acclamation, without a vote, because it was Israel’s turn to represent the Western European and Others Group at the committee.

“A big defeat for Iran which tried but failed to get elected to this committee,” UN Watch, a Geneva-based nonprofit, [commented](https://www.unwatch.org/israel-wins-vp-spot-un-committee-overseeing-human-rights-groups/) on the rare election of an Israeli to a senior position within the UN.