



המשלחת הקבועה של ישראל לאומות המאוחדות
PERMANENT MISSION OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by:

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Madame Chairperson, Her Excellency Carmen Maria Gallardo,

I would like to congratulate you on your nomination as Chairperson of this prestigious commission. As Chairperson of the Council of Women's Organizations in Israel, it is a great pleasure and honor for me to speak here today, on behalf of the Israeli delegation, on the two themes chosen.

During the past few decades, the advancement of women in the fields of education, health, culture, and employment has been a top priority in Israel.

Israel takes great pride in the high number of women justices in the Supreme Court, where 5 out of 11 justices are women. In a few months from now, Justice Dorit Beinisch will be appointed as the first woman President of the Supreme Court. In addition, the majority of prosecutors in the office of the Attorney General are women.

Only recently, Israel appointed a female Foreign Minister, Ms. Tzipi Livni, the second woman foreign minister in Israel. She follows in the footsteps of Golda Meir, Israel's first Foreign Minister, who later became the Prime Minister of Israel.

A balanced participation of men and women in the management of public affairs is central to any democracy. Our research reveals more than a 35 percent increase of women members of boards of directors of business enterprises. In addition, in the field of culture in Israel, it is often women who have taken upon themselves to manage and direct successful centers of the arts, such as the Israeli Opera and various theaters.

Women's organizations in Israel are investing much effort in empowering women and advancing them in various fields, especially in decision-making bodies, such as the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, where, despite lacking the number of women representatives we hope to attain, a number of laws have passed that promote women's issues. Most recently, the Israeli Women's Equal Rights Law was amended, in the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, mandating that the Israeli government include women in any group appointed to peace-building negotiations or international conflict resolution.

Nevertheless laws alone cannot ensure gender equality. Education is the main way to achieve this target. Women's organizations in Israel have established schools for advancing women in political roles, giving them self-confidence and empowering them, and thus enabling them to qualify for positions within different parties. Israel has taken steps to incorporate gender equality into various educational forums, such as day care centers in Israel, where Israeli children regardless of ethnic background attend educational projects with a focus on learning about gender equality and attending multi-cultural enrichment programs.

Madame Chairperson,

In 1998, the State of Israel established a special body in the Prime Minister's Office, 'The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women,' designated specifically for protecting and promoting women's rights.

The Authority strives to narrow the gap between the pro-women's legislation and the implementation of this legislation, shaping government policy related specifically to the

needs of women in every national program, coordinating between governmental bodies, distributing information, promoting awareness, and building a network of women leaders in the community.

Madame Chairperson,

Israel has additionally promoted women's advancement on an international level, through its Center for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MASHAV. Since 1961, MASHAV has made a notable contribution to the welfare of women in the developing world. In the last 5 years alone, MASHAV trained 4,000 women from 147 countries in different fields related to improving gender equality in socio-economic development. Training activities address poverty alleviation, education, environment, migration, the girl-child, health, economic participation, conflict resolution, and other areas relevant to women's issues.

MASHAV's main goal in the field of gender issues is to strengthen capacity building and leadership of women's organizations and networks, placing the focus on women's empowerment as a critical factor in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Madame Chairperson,

Israel's Declaration of Independence safeguards equality as a basis of our democracy. It states that equality forbids discrimination based on gender. Our Supreme Court interpreted it to include inter alia women arbitrators in religious councils and an affirmative action program to secure proper representation of women in government positions. The Knesset affirmed this development by ratifying specific laws to forbid discrimination of women. We believe Israel has experienced great progress on the issue of women's advancement; however, this issue requires continuous attention and effort.

For instance, too many obstacles prevent women from attaining top positions in academia. No matter how talented a woman may be, there still exists challenges for women to attain professorships. We would also like to increase the number of women in the municipal and national levels of government.

We are proud of our many accomplishments in the area of women's advancement, and remain committed to overcoming the challenges that still exist in the effort to provide equal roles and opportunities for women and men in society.

Thank you Madame Chairperson.