

ISRAEL

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Check Against Delivery

Statement by
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Agenda Item 28
"Advancement of Women"

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate UN WOMEN, which in its short existence as a UN body has managed to raise the profile of gender equality and the empowerment of women on the international agenda.

Israel strongly supports UN WOMEN's recently adopted Strategic Plan, and as a sign of confidence in the organization, Israel has committed to substantially increasing its contributions for the next three years.

Mr. Chairman,

Gender equality is a fundamental principle that has long guided the Government of Israel. It is enshrined in our 1948 Declaration of Independence. And just three years later, Israel enacted the 1951 *Equal Rights for Women Law*, a testimony to the emphasis placed on gender-related issues from the State's inception.

Women have always enjoyed full rights and equality in Israel, breaking many preconceived "glass ceilings" long ago. As far back as 1969, Israel was the third country in the world to be led by a female prime minister, Golda Meir. Today, there are many women in Israel in high-placed leadership roles, including the president of the Supreme Court, the leader of the main opposition party, and the newly elected leader of the Labor party, the very same party that Golda Meir once led. Women also represent more than 50% of Israel's judiciary, more than 50% of university students and more than 50% of university staff.

Israel is rapidly becoming a leader among countries in the struggle for women's equality, with many programs to increase awareness and consciousness, and numerous institutional mechanisms to promote equality, supported by vibrant NGOs and an active civil society.

Israel's parliament, the Knesset, has enacted a range of legislation to further gender equality, such as the Gender Implications in Legislation law – a key gender mainstreaming tool, which stipulates that all bills that come through the Knesset must be analyzed in terms of gender before they are passed.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel is deeply committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 adopted in 2000 and its subsequent resolutions, including resolution 1969, which we co-sponsored last December. We support the inclusion of a greater gender perspective in peacekeeping operations and peace processes. In this regard, we welcome the increased deployment of gender advisers and the routine inclusion of provisions in peacekeeping mandates that protect women and girls from sexual violence.

Despite such efforts, we are deeply concerned over the slow progress on the issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, particularly against women and children, and we were especially alarmed by the involvement of UN peacekeepers in sexual misconduct and sexual abuse in Haiti. We appreciate the Secretary-General's commitment to investigate and to ensure that the UN's zero-tolerance policy on misconduct by its personnel is enforced.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel recognizes the integral link between empowering women and advancing global development goals, such as poverty and hunger eradication. We welcome the focus on these issues in the upcoming session of the CSW and the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, A/66/181, "Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas."

Gender equality is a key priority of MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, which has been dedicated to the cause of empowering women around the world for more than 54 years. In 2006, MASHAV launched in rural Senegal the TIPA project, which empowers small-holder women farmers, enabling them to optimize agricultural production through the use of drip-irrigation technology. The project has helped triple the agricultural income of 60 families in less than two years. Similar projects are currently being implemented in several West African countries.

Israel is committed to sharing our advanced agriculture technology with others around the world. To this end, we initiated four years ago a biennial resolution entitled "Agriculture Technology for Development", which this year will have an added focus on women. We call on all states to co-sponsor this year's resolution, which will be tabled in the Second Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

Education remains another key component of advancing the empowerment of women. As such, MASHAV conducts numerous education programs for women, including at the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center, which is celebrating this year its 50th anniversary as one of the world's first development training centers dedicated to the empowerment of women.

In addition to organizing training programs, the Carmel Center hosts biennial international conferences on development issues for women leaders. In May this year, the Center hosted the 27th international conference, focusing on "Science, Technology and Innovation: Education and Training for Women and Girls," in line with the theme of the 55th session of the CSW. We were honored that the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, and Mrs. Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, opened the conference, joining dozens of other leaders from around the world.

Israel also supports the Secretary-General's UNITE to End Violence Against Women Campaign. Just last month, the Carmel Center concluded an international workshop on violence against women and children, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to conclude by reiterating Israel's commitment to advancing the status of women. We look forward to working with others in the international community to promote this critical goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

