

Thank you.

At the outset, I wish to express the sadness and deepest sympathies of the Government of Israel and the people of Israel over the tragedy in which Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, senior members of the Polish government, army and all of the members of the Polish delegation lost their lives.

Mr. Chairperson,

I wish to offer you my personal warm congratulations on your election to the bureau and I wish you success and achievement. I am confident that your leadership and guidance will help the CPD effectively tackle the many issues it addresses in a professional and effective manner. I also wish to offer my best wishes to the vice-chairs on their elections to the bureau.

On behalf of the State of Israel, I also would like to thank the Commission Secretariat for the reports that were submitted and for their thorough and invaluable work. Your dedication and commitment to this commission and to its success is greatly appreciated. Israel also applauds the work that the UNFPA has conducted towards the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Israel looks forward to professional and fruitful work of this commission.

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I wish to express the sadness and deepest sympathies of the Government of Israel and the people of Israel over the tragedy in which Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, senior members of the Polish government, army and all of the members of the Polish delegation lost their lives.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past century, the world population has expanded exponentially while our advances in science and health have progressed in great speed, as well. However, such growth and progress created new obstacles that pose serious challenges to the health of our communities. As such, the work of this commission is crucial in reviewing population trends and evaluating and recommending best practices.

This year's theme, "health, morbidity, mortality and development" offers us the opportunity to take a broad view of our health systems as a whole in order to further implement the Program of Action. For Israel, these challenges are particularly meaningful as the fertility rate in Israel stands at three children per woman, higher than most developed countries.

At the same time, women make up an increasing proportion of the labor force and those seeking educational opportunities.

This unique pattern among developed countries is linked to a stable model for family planning. Israel has successfully integrated the value of larger families with an extensive reproductive health system that maintains maternal and infant health.

Since its inception, the Government of Israel has adopted many laws, policies, and programs that work to sustain the health and safety of its population. This task is complicated by the fact that Israel is a very diverse country that welcomed millions of immigrants from the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Asia, as well as North and South America. These demographic realities are in addition to the mosaic of Israeli society that encompass traditional populations.

Such multifaceted cleavages within Israeli society require many specific and targeted programs to meet the varied needs of the population. Considering these demands, Israel's National Health Insurance Law mandates that every resident must have comprehensive health care coverage. To ensure implementation of this coverage, we have instituted free and subsidized clinics that provide information, testing, treatment, and support to vulnerable populations.

As part of this holistic approach, Israel has integrated health and educational services to advance the status of women. One successful example is the establishment of government subsidized day care centers that support early childhood education and empower women in the workforce. Israel has an extremely low infant and maternal mortality rate. Our success in this area is a result of a wide network of family health centers that offer prenatal, postpartum, and sexual health services to women while also administering comprehensive infant and child care.

These government-funded Mother and Child Health Clinics are receiving such impressive reviews, that Israel has partnered with other countries, particularly in Africa, to incorporate this model into their own health care systems.

Mr. Chairperson,

Beyond the field of medicine, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation reaches out to share its experiences and models with interested parties. Israel continues to seek additional ways to assist in global societal development. Much of our work focuses on Africa, where the MDGs — particularly MDG 5, reducing maternal mortality — still require great attention.

To further support and accelerate development, Israel is currently planning an International Capacity Development Center in order to share our ever-growing knowledge in the fields of population and development.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we approach the High-Level Plenary, we take stock of our progress and our shortcomings towards achieving the MDGs. We must rededicate ourselves to implement the Program of Action, as well as to find more sustainable ways to guarantee the health and wellbeing of our populations. These themes are of great importance to Israel and I look forward to our individual and collective action in order to advance the work of this commission.

Thank you.