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Statement by

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State of Implementation of Various Commitments,
Challenges and the Way Forward"

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenges facing the peoples of Africa strike a profound chord in the heart of Israelis. Over a century ago, Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, saw a direct connection between the Jews' quest for freedom and independence and that of the nations of Africa. He wrote:

“There is still one other question arising out of the disaster of the nations which remains unsolved to this day, and whose profound tragedy only a Jew can comprehend! This is the African question... I am not ashamed to say that once I have witnessed the redemption of the Jews, my people, I wish also to assist in the redemption of the Africans.”

A century later the people of Israel remain committed to working to meet the challenges facing Africa and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, with our shared experience of centuries of persecution, Israel cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of hundreds of thousands of innocent people from Darfur who have been turned into refugees in their own country. Israel sends aid to the victims of this tragedy, wherever possible.

It was Israel's Prime Minister Golda Meir who began to turn Herzl's vision of partnership and progress into a reality. After visiting Africa she was struck by the remarkable similarities between the challenges faced by the peoples of Africa and the young State of Israel. "Like the peoples of Africa", she later wrote, "we had shaken off foreign rule; like them, we had to learn for ourselves how to reclaim the land, how to increase the yields of our crops, how to irrigate, how to raise poultry, how to live together, and how to defend ourselves." And the Israeli experience might be even more appropriate for Africa, she wrote, since Israel "had been forced to find solutions to the kinds of problems that large, wealthy, powerful states had never encountered."

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Israel's international cooperation arm – MASHAV – began in 1958, as a modest program focused on grassroots-level human capacity building. It has since blossomed into an extensive program of cooperation, not only in Africa but throughout the developing world, with the aim of promoting sustainable development and social equity.

One example of an area in which sharing experience can have a dramatic impact is small-scale drip irrigation. The Israeli project TIPA– or *Technological Innovation for Poverty Alleviation* – extends the advantages of drip irrigation to traditional farmers, affording them the means of self-sufficiency. Designed for small holdings of 500-1000 square meters, TIPA can sustain the nutritional requirements of a 6-member family. In practice, as we have seen for example in the TIPA project in Senegal, this simple system can literally revolutionize the lives of an entire village.