

ISRAEL

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by
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Thank you Madame Chair,

I wish to offer Israel's congratulations to both you and the vice-chairs on your elections. Israel would also like to thank the Commission Secretariat for the thorough and timely reports that were submitted. Israel is committed to the work of the Commission and will contribute and assist its work as much as possible. We look forward to joining as members in the coming 43rd commission that will address inter alia, health, morbidity, mortality and development.

Israel applauds the UNFPA on its work to implement the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. It has been fifteen years since the ICPD in Cairo. Since that time, there has been incredible change in our world, which should recommit us to the principles which were adopted. The theme of this year's Commission gives us an added opportunity to evaluate what we have accomplished and to reassert ourselves in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The Commission on Population and Development is an essential forum to explore constructive policies that address the important and urgent issues of rapid population growth, societal health, and sustainable development. The commission must also examine demographic changes. These matters are becoming even more pressing as we confront the manifold global crises of our day.

Climate change is an increasingly distressing threat as we become more aware of its detrimental effects on all aspects of life including sustainable development. Climate change has consequences on many areas such as land degradation, desertification, drought, natural disasters, immigration, threats to health and more. These issues are of greatest concern and are directly related to issues of population and development. The global economic crisis will only exacerbate and aggravate such phenomena.

We are quickly approaching an age when at least half of the world's population will live in cities. The effects of this demographic shift are far reaching; already strained social and health services will be heavily taxed.

Madame Chair,

Given Israel's experience, we fully appreciate these challenges. Israel has witnessed periods of rapid population growth and high immigration. Israel is unique in that it continues to absorb immigrants from diverse ethnic, cultural, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds, including individuals from Ethiopia, North and Latin America, Western Europe, and beyond. Just over the last fifteen years alone, Israel successfully absorbed about one sixth of its population – more than one million immigrants – from the former Soviet Union. Maintaining and streamlining health and social services, and education with a focus on early childhood education for this diverse group of immigrants, as well as for other minority groups, continues to be of utmost importance.

Even with these successes, there is still much to be done to extend the full range of Israel's health and social services to its minority groups and other sectors of its society.

Israel has numerous laws, policies, and programs that work to maintain the health and safety of its population. The Commission for Future Generations is an inner-parliamentary entity that advocates for the rights of future generations in all proposed legislation. The Commission is mandated to initiate legislation to advance the interests of future generations and block legislation that is detrimental to future generations.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, located in the Prime Minister's Office, is yet another example of a governmental body that promotes the health and safety of the population, as well as equality between men and women. This Authority works to promote policies for the status, health, and safety of women. Another such body is the National Women's Health Council which advises the Ministry of Health on women's health issues.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations are also taking part in advancing health and education by initiating projects, lobbying the government and educating the public on population and gender issues. For example, their advocacy and voluntarism led to the establishment of government subsidized day care centers that support early childhood education and empower women in the workforce.

Madame Chair,

Israel puts great emphasis on the importance of public health. As such, Israel's National Health Insurance Law mandates that every resident must have health care, which includes maternal and infant coverage. To fulfill this initiative, we have established clinics that cater to the needs of specific, vulnerable populations including individuals who are at-risk for sexually transmitted diseases. Many of these clinics are free and provide information, testing, treatment, and support.

Israel has an excellent record on maternal and infant health. 99% of births are attended to by skilled health personnel. The maternal mortality rate is four women per 100,000 live births while the infant mortality rate is four infants per 1,000 live births. These numbers are a result of the extensive network of family health centers that offer prenatal, postpartum, and sexual health services to women. Israel created government-funded Mother and Child Health Clinics, in Hebrew *Tipat Chalav*. These clinics provide prenatal care, administer vaccinations, and maintain records of the child's physical and mental development.

Israel would be pleased to partner with other countries to assist in incorporating this model into their own healthcare systems. We are currently doing so in Ghana, where we are helping to incorporate this model in an Israeli-led project as part of a neonatal health initiative. *Tipat Chalav*, is recognized by UNESCO as a successful model of public health and education.

Israel has on average a total fertility rate of three children per woman. This rate is high for a developed country and results from the religious and cultural values in Israeli society, including its more secular components. At the same time, there are striking increases in women's educational attainment, labor force participation, and income, and all this despite the dramatic changes in economic and social spheres that Israel experienced during this period. This is a unique pattern among developed countries, and 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.

Stable fertility levels have generated a more balanced age composition in the Israeli population, as opposed to the sharp ageing of societies with very low fertility. Extreme ageing is a cause of concern for the future equilibrium between productive human resources in the labor force and the transfer payments due to the elderly.

Madame Chair,

Israel looks outward to create more partnerships and share these models with others. MASHAV, Israel's Center for International Cooperation, works to improve the health, safety, and development for women around the world. Israel has also partnered with many UN organizations in the global effort to achieve the MDG's. These partnerships continue to lead to a multitude of programs that address issues of migration and health, early childhood education, seminars on the prevention of HIV/AIDS among adolescents for participants from Africa, training programs for women on business and technologies, and a multitude of empowerment and health programs for women from partner countries.

Israel is unique in that we have transformed from a developing country to a developed one in the last half century. Having this experience Israel believes it can be a model and is best suited to share these experiences.

Madame Chair,

Israel is committed to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. We anticipate cooperation and fruitful results over the next few days as we share ideas, discuss challenges, expand partnerships, and collaborate on further initiatives.

Thank you.