

ISRAEL

Check Against Delivery

Statement by

Ambassador Ron Prosor

Permanent Representative

Commission on Population and Development

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Mr. Chair,

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank DESA for organizing this year's Commission for Population and Development. In particular, I want to commend UNFPA Executive Director, Babatunde Osotimehin, for his tireless efforts to promote the agenda of population and development.

Mr. Chair,

We are all familiar with the proverb "It takes a village to raise a child." Well it takes a family of nations to raise a generation out of poverty. And it takes a family of nations to create a more equitable and more sustainable world built on human rights and human dignity.

As we work towards a post-2015 development agenda, the groundbreaking ICPD Global Review Report provides a blueprint to address both new and longstanding challenges.

Its recommendations provide a promising path forward, because despite our many successes, progress has not come fast enough or gone far enough. Around the world one in three women reports being physically or sexually abused. In many nations, women are still paid less than men for doing the same work. And hundreds of thousands of women still lose their lives in childbirth every year.

Overcoming these challenges will depend on our ability to support the most vulnerable members of society, particularly women and youth. The reasons are simple: When a girl is deprived of an education, poverty is passed to the next generation. When a young entrepreneur can't start a new business, a nation's economy stagnates. And when a woman is denied equal rights, the shadow of repression looms large.

Mr. Chair,

In a region where women are often excluded from public life, Israeli women stand out as leaders. They serve in our parliament and on our supreme court; they lead political parties and play leading roles in academia; they fly fighter jets and have soared to great heights in our business and banking sectors.

Israel knows that women are the cornerstones of a society and the stepping stones to a better future. Empowering women is a matter of basic human rights. It is about a women's right to have control over her body, to live free of violence, to have a voice in her community, to choose whom she will marry and when, and to decide how many children she will have. Ensuring women's sexual and reproductive rights is a fundamental precondition of sustainable development.

Razia Jan grew up in Afghanistan and moved to the United States to pursue an education. When she heard that the women in her native village were suffering under the brutality of the Taliban, she sacrificed her security and returned home to open the Zabuli Education Center for girls.

When the school's doors first opened, 90 percent of the students were illiterate. Today, every girl in the school can read and write. Thanks to the vision and sacrifices of one brave woman, hundreds of girls can build a better life for themselves, their families and their nation.

Razia Jan's story is proof that when we invest in women, they invest in their families and communities.

Imagine if every woman could raise her voice against inequality, injustice and indifference. They would not only raise their children; they would lift up entire societies.

Mr. Chair,

In every community, young people are the hope for the future. They are the ones with courage, determination and ingenuity.

In Kenya, 13 year-old Richard faced a serious problem. A pride of lions was attacking his family's herd of cattle. Recognizing that these lions put his family's income at risk, Richard invented "Lion Lights." These lights flicker and scare the lions away. Richard's idea caught on and he has helped his neighbors install their own Lion Lights.

Imagine if we invested in young people so that they had the opportunity to share their ideas. Like Richard, they would create businesses that are roaring successes.

Mr. Chair,

The ICPD Programme of Action encourages partnerships with civil society because in places where women, children and minorities are relegated to the sidelines, civil society is on the frontlines, fighting for their rights.

The Amhara region in Ethiopia has one of the world's highest rates of child marriage and civil society is tackling this problem head on.

An organization called TESFA - which means "hope" - is teaching girls about sexual and reproductive health. They taught Almaz, a child bride of 14, how to save money and care for her newborn child. Thanks to TESFA, Almaz will have the chance to grow into a healthy, productive adult who will one day prevent her own daughter from becoming a child bride.

Imagine if civil society was allowed to drive progress – it would steer nations towards greater peace and prosperity.

Mr. Chair,

As I look around the world today, it's clear that progress is stagnating. I look around and see girls who are shot in the head when they try to get an education. I see young people who are trapped in a crippling cycle of poverty. And I see governments that are far from civil when dealing with civil society.

I look around the world and it is clear to me that we can do more and we must do more to help people like Razia, Richard and Almaz. In the immortal words of John Lennon's "Imagine" – I call on all nations to:

"Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world...
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one"

Thank you Mr. Chair.