

ISRAEL

66th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Check Against Delivery

Statement by
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Agenda item 5
General Debate on the contribution of population and development issues to
the theme of the annual ministerial review in 2012

"Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate
poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable, and equitable economic
growth at all levels for achieving the MDGs."

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Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Since the onset of the 2008 economic crisis and recession, youth unemployment has risen steadily in countries around the world. This rise is one of the most pressing economic and social problems the world faces today. It has significant national and global impacts, including increased violence, crime and political instability. Achieving decent work for young people is critical to achieving more productive economies, more cohesive societies, and stronger democracies.

Like in many countries around the world, integration into the labor market is a significant challenge for young adults in Israel. This is particularly true for those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and who have low levels of education and few family and community resources.

The Government of Israel has developed a multi-pronged strategy to face this challenge—and it starts with education. The future of any society depends on the quality of its educational system. Enhancing education is a critical factor in improving employment prospects for youth.

Israel has invested significantly in increasing school retention, by offering financial incentives to schools, and providing extra instruction and support for low achievers and for those with behavior problems. Major progress has been made and today approximately 90% of our youth complete high school. For those students who do drop out of the regular school system, the Ministry of Education provides one-on-one instruction and alternative education programs, allowing them to continue their education in a supportive environment.

Beyond basic secondary education, approximately half of the 25 year olds in Israel have also pursued higher education in universities or other post-secondary tracks.

However, many young people who belong to more disadvantaged social groups continue to face significant barriers, including failure to meet university entry requirements.

To meet this challenge, the Government of Israel has expanded an initiative which provides one- or two-year second-chance preparatory courses. Many of these courses are customized to meet the needs of special populations, including Israeli-Arabs, Ethiopian immigrants, the disabled and youth who have grown-up in residential facilities of the child welfare system. There are also a number of initiatives which adapt workforce preparation programs for these groups.

Although there is a wide range of opportunities and services are available throughout the country, young people often lack the information or need special assistance to access them. As a response, the Israeli Government, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and other organizations are partnering to develop a national network of Young Adult Centers. These Centers began as a service for new immigrants but have now been expanded to serve all young adults. Their goal is to help young adults link up with employment opportunities by promoting access to continuing education, vocational counseling, volunteer opportunities and leadership training. Personal support is also provided when required.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel recognizes that investments in science, technology, and innovation education are among the most critical sources of economic transformation in many countries around the world. In today's world, an understanding of science, mathematics, and technology is crucial in the workplace. As more and more tasks become computerized, jobs increasingly require high-level skills that involve critical thinking, problem-solving, communicating ideas to others, and collaborating effectively. Many of these jobs build on skills developed through high-quality science, mathematics, and technology education.

Throughout Israel, a number of large educational networks have been established to provide educational programs fostering and encouraging young students to develop their abilities and careers in high-tech and advanced scientific studies. The ORT Israel network, for example, specializes in instilling knowledge, skills and values in its students, and operates throughout Israel, especially in peripheral regions. Today, one out of ten Israeli high school students study in an ORT managed institution.

Mr. Chairman,

Empowering adolescents and youth also lies at the heart of Israel's international development work. One example is the collaboration between the Mount Carmel International Training Center and the Young American Business Trust, who have introduced entrepreneurship as a self-help tool for the benefit of young people across Latin America and the Caribbean Islands. Since the project was launched in the year 2000, it has spread to 29 countries and has reached 23000 beneficiaries, most of whom are young school students, and university graduates. Together, they developed several training modules including business laboratories, small business development centers, and training in rural tourism. This collaboration scheme is now being replicated on the African continent.

Mr. Chairman,

To address youth unemployment, we must foster young people's creativity and talent, while at the same time work to create conditions in which they will be able to exercise their capabilities and apply their skills. Their future depends on a good start— one that develops skills, breeds self-motivation and results in self-confidence.

If provided with opportunities and a supportive environment, youth around the world can be important drivers of social change, economic development and technological innovation. Youth bring with them limitless energy, imagination, and creativity. However, if these qualities are not utilized, we risk wasting enormous opportunities for economic growth and greater well-being.