

ISRAEL

The 54TH Session of The Commission on the
Status of Women

Check Against Delivery

**Statement by
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People, Students and Women

15-year review of the implementation of the
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
(1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third
special session of the General Assembly (2000)

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Excellencies, dear colleagues,

As we recall the 15 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, it is a time for reflection on the progress that we have made. On this anniversary, we recall that in Beijing, women from around the world declared their determination to advance the cause of equality in its broadest and most noble senses.

While we mark this milestone, much remains to be done. Women and girls continue to be deprived of many of the same opportunities as men, and these disparities persist, in different ways and to different degrees, in every country. The clock is ticking on the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals, and without forceful action on the gender aspects of the Goals, the international community will fall far short of its aspirations.

Excellencies,

Israel is proud that women play a significant and increasingly important role in Israeli society — from science to politics to the arts to business.

From our declaration of independence through today, Israeli legislation guarantees gender equality. Today the Israeli Knesset (parliament) is 18% female and women continue to have an impact on every level of government from the Supreme Court to the Foreign Ministry. In fact, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appointed me as Deputy Minister for Women, Young People and Students. This and other governmental action in this sphere has positive and far reaching implications for us all.

In 1998, the government established the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women as part of the Prime Minister's Office. Since its inception, the Authority has pioneered innovative approaches to reduce inequality between men and women. In fact, the Authority focuses on many of the same areas of critical concern highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In 2007, the Authority was mandated by the Israeli parliament to submit reports on the potential implications for women of any new legislation. This regulation, aptly named the Gender Implications in Legislation, ensures that in the formulation of any new legislation, women's needs are accounted for.

Beyond the Prime Minister's office, Israel established the Commission for Equal Opportunities in the Workplace in 2008. The Commission works to address the specific issues raised in creating a fair and family-friendly workplace.

Israel's Ministry of Education also plays an integral role in promoting women's equality. In fact, it established a Department for Gender Equality that operates programs to educate people against gender stereotypes. Other gender-specific efforts include special programs that teach about values of mutual respect between people, particularly between couples, as well as about cultivating values and norms of equality between the sexes.

Excellencies,

The success of these and other programs fuel our progress on this important matter, yet serious obstacles remain.

While violence against women, prostitution, human trafficking, and other forms of abuse against women are strictly illegal in Israel, we continue to devote our sustained attention to combat these phenomena.

Every year, the Advancement of the Status of Women coordinates activities and campaigns to increase public awareness of the problem of such violence, and the government currently operates 70 centers to treat and prevent domestic violence, 14 of which are shelters for abused women and children.

Furthermore, in the past decade, social organizations have worked vigorously in conjunction with the government to disrupt human trafficking rings, punish those responsible, and rehabilitate the victims. In fact, the US State Department awarded Rachel Gershony, the Israeli national coordinator charged with combating human trafficking as a “hero working to abolish modern-day slavery.”

Excellencies,

When more than 5,000 women and men from around the world convened in Beijing, their message was universal. And so should ours be today. When the rights of women are denied, their poverty is ignored, discrimination against them is hidden, and cultural norms are used as justification for countless forms of abuse – these are the rightful causes of all women everywhere.

In this spirit, Israel extends its hand to women and men from other nations in order to build on the consensus for action that was achieved in Beijing. The State of Israel remains committed to the principle of equality as women reach their full potential.