

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Waxman Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on women and peace and security — a subject of great importance for all of us in the international community.

Israel believes that women must play an equal role in all aspects of the State and civil society. The Jewish people and the Jewish State have always understood that the progress of women is critical for the progress of all. The principle of gender equality has been a fundamental principle of the State of Israel since its inception. The World Zionist Organization, founded by Theodore Herzl as an umbrella organization for the modern Zionist movement, as early as in 1898 granted equal voting rights to women.

Gender equality is enshrined in our 1948 Declaration of Independence and in the 1951 Equal Rights for Women Law. Israel was the third country in the world to elect a female Prime Minister, Golda Meir, and women in Israel today hold senior leadership positions in Government, business, law and academia. Women take an active, vibrant and visible role throughout Israeli civil society. Israeli women from across the political, cultural and religious spectrum are involved in a broad variety of issues, including advocating for conflict resolution and peace.

Israel continues to strongly support the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and its subsequent resolutions. The Israeli Knesset, our Parliament, recognizes the importance of gender equality in peacemaking and conflict resolution. It recently enacted legislation requiring that Israeli women be included on all Government investigative committees and all Israeli peace negotiating teams. Israel is proud of the progress it has made in ensuring women's social equality and is deeply committed to empowering women worldwide.

In 2003, the Golda Meir Mount Carmel Training Center hosted an international conference for women leaders entitled "Women's Role in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding". As a result of the conference, the Center initiated a series of seminars entitled "Women Building a New Reality". Those seminars promote dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian women. The past decade has seen over 1,000 Israeli and Palestinian women participate in more than 20 such workshops. Just last month, the Center held its most recent seminar.

We are honoured to serve as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women — the principal global policymaking body dedicated to gender equality and the advancement of women. We are especially proud to serve as Chair of the Commission's Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women.

Israel welcomes the United Nations call to move from a culture of reaction to one of prevention. The Kampala Declaration of December 2011 represents a unique and historic opportunity to take meaningful action to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. We hope that the Declaration will end the impunity of the perpetrators of such violence and ensure that its victims receive the necessary and appropriate support.

It is important that we do more to ensure women's participation in decision-making on mission drawdowns and transitions. The United Nations must take the lead in the involvement of women and set an example for the international community. Israel supports the work of UN-Women in that regard. We encourage the United Nations to increase the number of women in United Nations leadership positions, including as special representatives and deputy special representatives of the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General's annual report (S/2012/732) on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) noted progress in investigating accusations of sexual misconduct committed by United Nations personnel in peacekeeping operations. That progress is encouraging. Let me emphasize that the United Nations should investigate all accusations swiftly, fully and transparently. In addition, all United Nations personnel must be properly trained in the appropriate conduct. The United Nations policy of zero tolerance must be strictly enforced. The reputation of all United Nations peacekeepers is at stake.

We echo the call of the Secretary-General to exercise special vigilance to protect women human rights defenders. Last month brought another reminder about what is at stake, when the Taliban attacked 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai,

because she dared to promote education for girls.

We must recognize the clear link between promoting peace and promoting equal rights for women. In too many parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, women have been subjugated and denied even the most basic of rights, including the right to vote, the right to drive and even the right to control their own bodies. That mistreatment of women cannot be ignored. It has created and will continue to create major barriers to understanding and conflict resolution. It is high time that the United Nations seriously address the dire situation of women in the Arab world. We know from our own history that when women lead, society gains. And Israel will continue to stand with the international community to work for the empowerment of women in all corners of the world.