

ISRAEL

TECHNICAL AND SOCIAL CONCEPTS

Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to thank you for your stewardship of this session. My delegation also wishes to commend the Division for the Advancement of Women for its work in preparation of this session and its ongoing efforts to promote women's equality.

Mr. Chairman,

The State of Israel is pleased that this session is considering as its priority theme "the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS." The increased feminization of HIV/AIDS makes this topic particularly relevant to the Commission. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, about 60% of adults living with the disease are women, and, as the Secretary-General's report on the subject points out, women and girls provide up to 90 percent of the care generated by the illness worldwide.

The reasons behind these disparities are complex, and include tradition, and legal, social and economic discrimination. The approaches to addressing these issues must be equally wide-ranging. To tackle inequities stemming from economic and social status, empowering strategies should include employment creation and assisting entrepreneurship.

In the area of HIV/AIDS prevention, women often lack the knowledge and power to insist on safe sexual practices. Their status and vulnerability is aggravated by poverty, conflict, migration, and the unraveling of their social and family structure. Meaningful health education programmes, along with economic and legal empowerment can go far in protecting women and helping them assert themselves and their rights. For those living with HIV/AIDS, civil society and government should support education campaigns aimed at reducing the stigma attached to the disease.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the principle of equality is enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence, and it has a record of significant female figures in government, the State has taken this principle to a higher level in the past two decades through its active promotion at all levels of Government. I wish to mention three mechanisms that are key to Israel's efforts to achieve gender parity: the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women, and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, which acts as an ombudsman in cases of workplace discrimination against women and minority groups. The Commission has the authority to investigate and prosecute cases of discrimination.

Just two months ago a law came into force that requires a gender impact assessment for all proposed legislation. This mandated analysis is based on the rationale that every policy affects men and women differently because of the different roles they fill in society, their unequal access to power, and their ability to influence the government budget.

A recent labour law allows for both parents to share parental leave. Additional legislation gives financial incentives for hiring women and promoting female employees to senior management positions. There is a similar policy of affirmative action in the civil service, where women account for a disproportionately large number of workers. The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women is currently evaluating the possibility of adopting a broad range of measures promoting a family-friendly workplace in the public sector. These laws and policies reflect the social understanding regarding

commitments.

Shared responsibility in the family begins with education children from a young age

conflict resolution efforts. Indeed, it is important to ensure that women are an integral part of any negotiation.

Mr. Chairman,

We listened carefully to the statement of the Palestinian Minister for Women's Affairs

