

Special Session of the General Assembly on ICPD Beyond 2014
22 September 2014
Remarks Delivered by the State of Israel

Mr. President,

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank UNFPA for organizing this Special Session. In particular, I want to commend UNFPA Executive Director, Babatunde Osotimehin, for his tireless efforts to promote the agenda of population and development.

Mr. President,

Twenty years ago, 179 leaders met in Cairo to declare that the hallmark of prosperous and sustainable societies depends on ensuring the fundamental human rights of every person.

Despite this commitment, I look around the world and see that far too many people remain the victims of chance rather than agents of change. A more secure, more prosperous and more peaceful planet begins by investing in people and giving them the tools to be the drivers of their own destiny.

Mr. President,

The subjugation of women cannot be ignored. When half the population is locked out, prevented from being productive and from pursuing opportunities, the path to development is obstructed.

As noted in the 2014 ICPD Review Global Report, investing in women is one of the best investments we can make. First, it makes simple economic sense. Countries with higher civic engagement and equality have significantly higher levels of per capita income.

Second, it's better for families and communities. We know that when a woman generates her own income she re-invests 90% of it in her family and community. That is why women's empowerment must be a pillar of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Finally, investing in girls and women isn't only the smart thing to do; it's the right thing to do. It is a matter of basic human rights. It is about a woman's right to have control over her body, to have a voice in her community, to live free of violence, to choose who she will marry and when, to get an education, to earn money and choose how to spend it. Ensuring women's sexual and reproductive rights is a fundamental precondition of sustainable development.

Mr. President,

I am proud that in a region where women are often excluded from public life, Israel stands out as a beacon of democracy and equality. Israeli women serve at the *highest* levels of our judicial and parliamentary system and have *soared* to great *heights* in our business and banking sectors.

Israel believes that all women deserve these opportunities. MASHAV, Israel's development agency is working with partners around the world to advance this goal. For example, in

Ghana, *Tipat Chalav*, which is Hebrew for a drop of milk, has helped establish maternal and infant health clinics and trained local health professionals working in these clinics.

Investing in women translates into investments in an entire society. Study after study shows that when a woman receives even just one year of schooling, her children are less likely to die in infancy or suffer from illness and more likely to go to school themselves.

Mr. President,

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

Young people make up 60% of the population in many parts of the developing world. If countries empower their young populations, they could experience unusually rapid economic growth.

Few nations know this better than Israel. We are a tiny nation with few natural resources, difficult farming conditions and persistent adversity. And yet, in just a few decades, we transitioned from a developing nation to a prosperous member of the OECD.

The secret to Israel's success is the investments we make in our greatest natural resource – our human resources. We have had learn to work from the neck up. By engaging and empowering every member of society – particularly young people - Israelis have propelled our small country to the forefront of the global economy.

Mr. Chairman,

Imagine a group of young women and men sitting in a circle beating drums. The drum circle has no head or tail. It includes people of all ages. Every person has his own rhythm, but when they listen to one another and work together, it makes the most amazing music that can be heard from miles away.

As an international community, we must protect the rights of men, women, and children everywhere. We must empower them, and encourage them so that every person can dance to the beat of his or her own drum – and working together, we can make this world a little more *melodious* and a little more *harmonious*.

Thank you, Mr. President.