



SIXTH COMMITTEE

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement by

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The rule of law at the national and international levels

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Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

Israel once again welcomes the opportunity to discuss the Rule of Law, a subject that has profound meaning and relevance to our Government. We remain deeply committed to this issue, and view it as one of the core values that should drive and shape the work of the Sixth Committee and the global community as a whole.

Mr. Chairperson,

On the domestic front, Israel's longstanding commitment to the rule of law in general, and to the principles of democracy and of equality before the law in particular, are enshrined in our Declaration of Independence and in our Basic Laws, including the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty. This legal framework, which serves as one of the important pillars of our State, serves to ensure that the rights of all of our citizens are upheld, and to facilitate coexistence in our diverse country that is comprised of a multitude of different cultural, religious, racial and ethnic groups.

Our active and autonomous judiciary, which is yet another pillar of Israel's democracy, further ensures equality and democratic rights. Israel's judiciary, including our Supreme Court, grants broad standing rights and direct access to citizens, as well as to non-citizens, in order to allow them to pursue justice when there is a concern that basic rights or civil liberties have been infringed upon.

Our Supreme Court also takes an active role in scrutinizing and reviewing domestic legislation adopted by the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament), executive orders and administrative decisions in order to ensure that basic, constitutional rights are upheld and that the rule of law is respected. This includes the vigorous analysis and critique of measures taken in the context of security and counterterrorism - often in real time - something that is largely unprecedented throughout the world.

Furthermore, there have been real and concerted efforts to ensure diversity and gender equality in our judiciary. Our current Chief Justice and two of our recent Chief Justices have been women; 4 of 15 of our Supreme Court Justices are women; 51% of our judges nationwide are women, and 8.5% of our judges nationwide are members of our non-Jewish minority groups, with 1/3 of that last group being women. Moreover, we are proud of the appointment in recent years of the first three judges of Jewish-

Ethiopian decent to our national courts, and of the first woman Kadiyah (religious judge) to a Muslim Sharia Court, which serves the Israeli Muslim community for matters related to personal status.

Mr. Chairperson

Israel is fully committed to human rights and we constantly strive to do more to both safeguard and promote a variety of rights including: women's rights, the rights of the child, the rights of people with disabilities, LGBTQ rights, the rights of minority groups, social and economic rights and more. We are also fully committed to fighting racism and discrimination.

Israel is party to all the major human rights treaties and reports, as required, on a regular basis. Just this month we completed our presentation of our periodic report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva.

Beyond our formal treaty reporting requirements, we are actively engaged on a regular basis with Israel's active and robust civil society, and hold regular roundtable discussions with NGOs, academia, UN bodies and other actors on a variety of pressing and relevant human rights issues and challenges.

And here at the United Nations we strive to promote human rights as well. For example, just a few months ago, we played an active role in the conference held on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD,) and held a series of successful side events featuring Israel's Commission for Equal Rights for People with Disabilities, on subjects ranging from making cultural events more accessible to persons with disabilities, to the integration of persons with mental disabilities in society at large and in the workplace.

We also strive to serve as a leader on the issue of preventing sexual harassment. Israel has always been one-step ahead of the curve on this matter. Well before the #meeto era, Israel had already adopted in 1998 a progressive and comprehensive domestic law prohibiting sexual harassment. We have also had some very important, albeit difficult, court decisions against our most senior officials, demonstrating our

commitment to this issue and how far we will go to put an end to sexual harassment and violence against women, not only in theory, but in practice as well.

Here at the UN, we are committed to sharing out best practices in this field as well, having co-founded the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Sexual Harassment, and having presented the first UN resolution on the issue of combating sexual harassment during the 2017 Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Mr. Chairperson,

On the international plane, Israel is also involved in the promotion of the rule of law in a multitude of efforts. We have spearheaded legal capacity building efforts in the developing world in the past, and seek to deepen these efforts further in cooperation and in conjunction with our global partners here at the UN.

In March 2018, Israel hosted the First International Conference on Treaty Practice, welcoming practitioners from around the world, and we were happy to see that this initial event inspired further international engagement and cooperation on treaty practice. In this vein, Israel was honored to take an active role in May in the events sponsored by our friends from Canada and Colombia on the Anniversary Celebration of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, and look forward to contributing to similar efforts and initiatives in the future and sharing our practices and expertise.

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the Secretary General's July 2019 Report on Strengthening and Coordinating United Nations Rule of Law Activities, and wish to use the opportunity to express our appreciation for the consistently professional work undertaken by the OLA and by its leadership.

In particular, Israel welcomes the attention given by the Secretary General in this year's report to the alarming rise in hate speech and incitement to violence and welcomes the action plan he has initiated to tackle these troubling phenomena. We

also appreciate efforts to help ensure the safety of religious sanctuaries. We also welcome the event held in the General Assembly on antisemitism in June and expect real action and outcomes to come out of that important and timely debate.

Israel also wishes to express support for the Secretary General's emphasis on the issue of climate change in the context of the rule of law. Israel remains a full and committed partner to international efforts to tackle climate change on the legal front and has adopted ambitious domestic policies and goals as well.

We also welcome the Secretary General's focus on anti-corruption efforts in his annual report. In this context, we wish to stress that such efforts must start at home and we encourage the United Nations, in this spirit, to handle with the utmost care and seriousness its own ongoing internal investigations of corruption and misconduct.

Mr. Chairperson,

With regard to the Secretary General's call for criminal accountability, Israel certainly supports the Secretary General's and United Nation's efforts to address deficits in justice and the rule of law and his calls to end impunity, and we embrace the Secretary General's repeated messages that the rule of law and criminal accountability efforts are first and foremost the responsibility of individual States, and should be undertaken at home at the national level.

Having said that, we also feel compelled to stress the need to put safeguards in place to prevent unwarranted, unconstructive and harmful politicization that often undermine these essential goals and crucial efforts.

In this vein, we wish to stress the importance of the rules on jurisdiction, both in the context of international treaty practice and in the context of national and international courts and tribunals. To be clear, the requirements put in place by international law for the proper establishment of jurisdiction are not mere "formalities". Rather, they serve as critical pillars of the rule of law by ensuring judicial independence, impartiality and the avoidance of politicization. They also serve to uphold the relevant institution's legitimacy, which is so very critical to a proper outcome. Any institution that ignores these important rules, and exceeds the bounds of the authority conferred

upon it -- opting, instead, to address delicate, complex and substantive matters without a well-founded assessment of its competence to do so -- undermines the validity of its own decisions and harms the credibility and integrity of that very institution.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, the State of Israel wishes to reiterate our commitment to the principle of rule of law and convey our wholehearted support for the UN's efforts in this vein. Israel stands ready to play an active and constructive role in backing and actively furthering these efforts both at home and abroad.

I thank you Mr. Chairperson