

Statement by:

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State of Israel

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Development

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Thank you, Madame President.

Allow me to also offer congratulations to you on assuming the Presidency of the 61St session of the General Assembly and best wishes on a successful tenure.

Madame President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Secretary-General said in his remarks this morning, "international migration today cries out for a global discussion." Indeed this is an important forum, and I look forward to our discussions in the coming days.

Madame President,

Israel is an immigrant country. Since its establishment, waves of immigrants have arrived on its shores, carrying with them the hopes and dreams of a better future. For 2000 years, the vast majority of Jews lived outside of Israel and could only pray to return to their homeland.

The gathering of the Jewish people in its own land through immigration is central to the national ethos of the Jewish people. Indeed, the Israeli immigrant experience is the very story of the modern Jewish state.

Today, Israel's population is over seven million. And of those seven million, 27.5 percent are foreign born. Those "ascending" to Israel from Russia, Ethiopia, France, and South America, as well as a host of other countries, experience a process in Israel specifically tailored to their needs, which better facilitates their successful absorption into society.

In Israel, immigrant integration begins with learning Hebrew, the national language. Multiple frameworks exist for studying Hebrew, ranging from full-time schools to online courses.

Financial assistance is also provided for immigrants. The average newcomer, with a wife and 2 children, receives an "Absorption Basket" with a value of \$10,000, for living expenses during the first 6 months. These subsidized months give immigrants the opportunity to use their first half year in Israel to learn Hebrew, find a job, rent an apartment, and prepare themselves for their new life.

Satisfactory employment for immigrants also remains a critical concern for Israel. In recent years, Israel has absorbed vastly differing groups of immigrants, some coming with advanced degrees and highly developed technical skills, while others arrive illiterate in their native language.

As such, vocational assistance is available for new immigrants in a variety of programs. These include licensing and qualifying courses, vocational training, and employment centers, which offer career guidance, placement services, and individual assistance.

Israel's public and private sectors have particularly benefited from immigrants. Since the beginning of the nineteen nineties, Israel has welcomed large waves of newcomers, primarily from the former Soviet Union, and among them, many doctors, engineers and scientists. Many artists, writers, and musicians also immigrated at that time, leading to a dramatic enrichment in arts and culture.

Throughout all this, Israel has tried to respect the indigenous culture of the immigrant communities. The outcome has been the growth of a rich society built on a tapestry of multiculturalism, pluralism, and tolerance.

Very special relations exist between Israel and the Jewish communities around the world. As a result, Israel has experience on how to nurture partnerships between Diaspora and origin communities. In this regard, Israel works with international partners to share this information and cooperate on a variety of levels.

Like other countries, Israel also faces challenges presented by the tragic growth of trafficking. Trafficking is a crime that imperils the lives of those subjected to it. As a signatory to both the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its

supplementary Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, Israel continues to work in this area and combat trafficking.

Israel is wholeheartedly committed to welcoming immigrants and fully integrating them into society while respecting their cultural heritage. And Israel will work with international partners to maximize the societal and human development potential of the global labor market.

Indeed, Israel's commitment to bettering the migrant experience is deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition. As is written in the Bible:

וְאַתֶּם, יָדַעְתֶּם אֶת-נַפְשׁ הַגֵּר--כִּי-גֵרִים הֵייתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

"And you know the soul of the stranger, because you too were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Shemot/Exodus 23:9).

Thank You.