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Statement by
Ms. Dana Kursh
Delegate to the Third Committee

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PERMANENT MISSION OF ISRAEL
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
800 Second Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017

Tel: 212-499-5510
Fax: 212-499-5515
info-un@newyork.mfa.gov.il
<http://www.israel-un.org>

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election.

Mr. Chairman,

This year is, indeed, one that gives us cause for optimism. We have significant new tools in the struggle for equality. Earlier this year, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution on system-wide coherence, which created UN Women. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his statement welcoming the adoption, said that "UN Women will significantly boost UN efforts to promote gender equality, expand opportunity, and tackle discrimination around the globe."

Israel extends its congratulations to Ms. Michelle Bachelet, who was recently appointed as the first head of UN Women. Israel has long been active in the field of women's rights and gender-related aspects of development, and we have high hopes that the merging of the four principal gender-focused UN bodies will result in more streamlined, coordinated and, most importantly, effective activities in this area.

Another cause for hope is last month's launch of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, "Every Woman, Every Child". This cross-cutting Strategy will aid progress toward the fourth, fifth and sixth MDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

While we look forward, we also commemorate two major milestones. This month we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). The past decade has seen several additional resolutions and studies concerning gender and sexual violence in conflict. Israel supports the increasing momentum to include a greater gender perspective in peacekeeping operations and peace processes. We see the potential realized in many areas, including, for example, a surge in female recruits for Liberia's national police force, spurred, in part, by the example of the all-female police unit from India, which is deployed as part of the UN mission there. Recent events elsewhere, however, point to the fact that studies, or even more robust peacekeeping mandates, alone, do not necessarily lead to genuine increased protection for women. More effort *must* be made in this regard.

The second milestone is the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). The State of Israel extends its hand to women and men from other nations in order to build on the consensus for action that was achieved in Beijing.

Allow me to share with you, Mr. Chairman, some of the ways in which Israel is cooperating with other nations to put into practice this consensus for action. As a country that moved from an underdeveloped State in the 1950's, to just recently, becoming a member of the OECD, we feel that we can share with others our first-hand experience in development.

The Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre, established in 1961 by MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, has for decades been engaged in training activities and conferences in the socio-economic arena with an emphasis on gender equality. The Center conducts biennial international women leaders' conferences in which prominent women from around the globe review gender issues related to the interaction between development and conflict, and recommend strategies for shaping the future of their societies. The most recent conference, held in cooperation with the UN's Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, was devoted to the global financial problem and its implications for women. The conference concluded with a call for "... universal mandatory primary schooling for all girls and boys, as well as training and health care of girls and women, as means for shielding them from current and future crises...".

MASHAV's next biennial Women Leaders' Conference, which is being organized in cooperation with UNESCO's Division for Gender Equality, will be held in June 2011. Attendees will explore ways to advance the participation of girls and women in the fields of science and technology.

Mr. Chairman,

We have looked to the past and the future. Our current situation, however, gives us cause for serious reflection, given how much remains to be done. The present picture is complicated and, on occasion, extremely grim. We all know this part of our global reality:

- The vast majority of the more than one billion people living in abject poverty in the developing world are women;
- Over 500,000 women and girls die annually, mainly in developing countries, because of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, many of which could have been prevented;
- 15.7 million women are living with HIV, leading to 850,000 deaths annually.

Behind each and every one of these numbers, lie tragic stories of suffering. Most often, these tragedies do not passively "happen", but result from deliberate decisions of States, communities and families. Decisions not giving priority to the pressing needs of women and girls, or more overtly oppressive policies and practices, are both expressions of discrimination and subjugation.

Mr. Chairman,

We shall not despair; our strength is in our unity, determination, and in the creative initiatives we are undertaking. This can be seen in my own country, Israel, in many of the countries represented in this room, and by this organization – the United Nations.

Thank you very much, Toda Raba, Mr. Chairman.