

Delegation from the State of Israel

Position Paper for UN-Women

The Topics before the United Nations (UN) Entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women (UN-Women) are: Eliminating Child, Early and Forced marriage (CEFM) by 2030; and Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making. The State of Israel fully recognizes the Urgency to protect women's rights. CEFM constitutes a serious threat to multiple aspects of the physical and psychological health of women and girls. Therefore, Israel hopes to find extensive solutions to the mentioned topics. Israel sees a need to collaborate and setting up strategic plans and implementing policies when it comes to the fight against gender-based violence and especially to the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making.

I. Eliminating Child, Early and Forced marriage by 2030

According to the United Nations Children's Fund, approximately 15 million girls are married every year before the age of 18, and more than 700 million women and girls alive today were married before their eighteenth birthday. Girls all over the world are suffering from decisions which are often made by their parents above their heads due to financial or social aspects. Closely connected to an early and forced marriage is the access to educations, which remains closed for many young girls. Regarding all those facts, CEFM can be described as a serious crime against human and especially women's rights.

In line with the UN-Charter, the Universal declaration of Human Rights Article sixteen, women and men in full age should be able to marry and to found a family without any limitation because of race, nationality or religion and the UN-Human Rights Council Resolution 29/8 which emphasizes that child, early and forced marriage is a harmful practice that violates, abuses and impairs human rights and is linked to and perpetuates other harmful practices and human rights violations, Israel is fully recognizing the extended need of improvement of the legal situation for women and especially for young girls. Recognizing that the fight for gender equality is a complex one, Israel would highly appreciate to work together with the international community to find international and best of all regional solutions in crisis zones when it comes to CEFM.

CEFM is not only an abuse of human rights itself but furthermore closely linked to other harmful practises and human rights violations against women. Due to the history of our nation it is our duty to promote the human rights and the rights of women all over the world.

Therefore, Israel stresses the importance of further discussion and externalization of the educational aspect. Education supports the sustainable development as it helps boys and girls reach their full growth potential, attain their sexual and reproductive rights, and contribute to the economic growth. We should work together to improve education programmes to make the girls realize that they have the right to decide themselves when or whom they marry.

In order to reach a raising level of education amongst girls we have to fight poverty as a huge factor when it comes to Early or Child marriage. Sometimes, families can not afford the costs for education and are dependent on the money they get when they marry their children. Accordingly, especially girls are often married young so that they are not longer a financial burden but attract a higher price due to their age.

Early and forced marriage is closely related to a lack of education on the side of the victims of CEFM. Israel sees the need of creating campaigns and funds in the field of preventing Early, Child and Forced Marriage to work against this problem. It is important that all member states try to work together on the Issue of Elimination of CEFM to ensure that there will be a better education structure to warn and inform about the threat of Forced Marriage.

II. Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making

Women's participation in national parliaments increased by 11.5 % between 1995 and 2016. In 2016, Compared with other UN-Member States, Israel is placed 54th of 185 nations having women included in their legislature. 26.7 % of the 120 member Knesset (Israeli Parliament) is female, which is nearly equal to the number of women in the US-Congress. For comparison, the female ratio in Scandinavia is over 40%, the European Union average is 17.6%, while in the Arab world it is 6.4%. Even though Israel is with 26.7 % a pioneer compared to its geographical environment, the nation stands in full support with further efforts especially on an international level. Regarding the fact that Israel was one of the first nations being led by a female prime minister, we want to underline the urgency to support aspiring women due to the fact, that Women's leaders often put issues on the agenda, that have been mostly under-addressed, for example the elimination of gender-based violence, balanced salaries and childcare. Remembering Golda Meir, third woman becoming leader of a western democracy, Israel firmly believe in the importance to strengthen women in leading positions and high ranks of government.

Beyond that, Israel believes that strong, capable women can be an enrichment to every government but also enterprise. The first challenge there is to create equality between men and women. The Knesset has established "The Committee on the Status of Women," to address women's rights. The stated objectives of this committee are to prevent discrimination, combat violence against women, and promote equality in politics, lifecycle events and education. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that also Israel still has a far way to go when it comes to gender equality at all levels but it is very important that we do not close our eyes to the problem. Although there are quite a few women, the atmosphere remains male, which is also connected to the international community. Women are still considered exceptional in certain areas such as defence and religious institutions, which is deeply rooted in many societies all over the world. That is why Israel stresses the importance of further discussion and externalization of the topic.

Israel signed the convention on the Eliminations of all forms of violence against women from 1979 which is also known as the bill of rights for women. In this context, Article seven should be highlighted: Women should grant the right to vote in all election, be eligible for all publicly elected bodies, having the opportunity to perform public services at all levels of government. Israel firmly believes in the fact that national security is one of the main components of a functioning state. The national defence plays a superior role in the state system. Israel is one of a few states in the world with a mandatory military service requirement for women. Women have taken part in the national defence since the founding of the state in 1948, with women currently comprising 33% of all IDF soldiers and 51% of its officers, fulfilling various roles within the Ground, Navy and Air Forces. Following the 2000 equality amendment to the Military Service law, the right of women to serve in any role in the IDF is equal to the right of men. This gender-independent treatment is an example for the opportunities, a state can provide for women's careers. Listening to our female part of population can only makes us stronger.

It could be a solution to formalize woman's participation in governance and decision-making positions through policies, which would raise women's involvement in a systemic manner. In contemplation of the difficulty, a change of the legal system means to every single nation, we should make small steps together. In terms of international cooperation, the international community could start with further assistance of UN-Campaigns to support the increase of Women in Governments and local parliaments. We have to overcome cultural barriers such as gender stereotypes, patriarchal values, and nascent democratic structures which can pose serious barriers to women in governments. Men still play a major role concerning economic resources, political power, and cultural norms all over the world. That is exactly the point we have to start with. The gender -equal education of the new male generation could be a chance to change the system by working on social roots. Accordingly, Israel is looking forward to enriching debates/innovative approaches to effectively address the issues remaining at the hand.