



SIXTH COMMITTEE

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement by

Ms. Yeela Cytrin

Legal Department
Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Rule of Law at the national and international levels

Agenda Item 85

08 October 2021

United Nations, New York

Thank you Madame Chairperson for convening this important annual debate.

As we all continue to navigate the global pandemic as an international community, the paramount importance of having independent, fair and reliable systems of justice in place on the domestic level becomes increasingly clear. It is essential to provide stability and law-and-order even in the most uncertain of times.

In Israel, we are proud that our vibrant democracy, our legislature, and our independent court system have remained functional and active even in the face of COVID-related lockdowns and restrictions.

In the last two years, the Israeli High Court of Justice conducted ongoing judicial reviews of our Government's COVID-19 policies. This review process reflects the independence of Israel's judiciary even during times of crisis, and Israel's unwavering commitment to democracy and the rule of law.

Madame Chair,

We take pride in Israel's achievements and its undying commitment to democracy and equality, as enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence and in our Basic Laws. I would like to take this opportunity to touch briefly upon some of Israel's most noteworthy developments in this realm in the past year.

As we have noted in our prior statements, Israel is fully committed to the advancement of women and gender equality, and we continue to champion for these issues both at the UN and at home. We wish to note in this context two widely-attended events that our Mission held this past year. The first is the groundbreaking, first-of-its-kind virtual dialogue held between senior women diplomats from Bahrain, the UAE and my country, Israel, following the signing of the historic Abraham Peace Accords. The other event – co-sponsored with our friends from the United States – showcased Israeli-developed technological advances that can help prevent domestic violence.

Israel is proud of our continued leadership of the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Sexual Harassment, a body we co-founded regarding an issue that – unfortunately - remains as relevant as ever. And we recall in this vein that Israel presented the first UN resolution on the issue of combating sexual harassment.

We also wish to note that the current Israeli cabinet is the

, which includes not only members of the Arab minority group in Israel, but the highest number of women serving as Ministers – nine out of 27. We also have a record-breaking number of women Director-Generals – also nine in total - leading our Ministries. Our Supreme Court continues to be headed by a woman Chief Justice, and 4 out of 15 Supreme Court Justices are women. And for the first time in our country's history, a woman – Advocate Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi - will serve in the highly important and sensitive role of Military Advocate General. She is the second woman to be promoted to the rank of Major General in IDF history.

Madam Chair,

The past year in Israel has also been a significant year of achievements and milestones for persons with disabilities. We are honored that Israeli expert Ms. Odelia Fitoussi – a lifelong champion of the rights of persons with disabilities – was chosen as the first Israeli to serve on the prestigious UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and we are proud of the valuable contribution that she is making to the work of the international community. In this vein, we also welcome the appointment of the first Minister with disabilities in our Government– who also happens to be a woman, and the election of the first deaf Member of Parliament, who delivered her maiden speech at the Knesset in sign language.

Madame Chair,

Turning to a different issue related to the rule of law, Israel reiterates its commitment to upholding domestic and international law and ensuring the need to prevent impunity and stop the gravest crimes from taking place. We underline that responsibility for this starts with each and every State, at home.

At the same time, it is critical that the enforcement of these norms be upheld in a manner that adheres to the basic principles and standards underpinning every proper legal system, including independence, objectivity, and fairness. It is particularly important that decisions be taken in a manner that is free from undue considerations and influence, and within the parameters of the respective mandates and authority of the institution in question. Any institution that fails to meet these demands, and succumbs to external pressures, undermines the very validity of its own decisions, its credibility and its integrity, to the detriment of justice and the true rule of law.

There is no justification for holding international judicial and quasi-judicial bodies to a different or lower standard than what is expected from similar domestic institutions. The international community must take action to ensure that proper safeguards to that effect are put in place.

I thank you Madame Chair.