

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security October 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Roet, Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations

This debate marks the fourteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and provides an important opportunity to address the persistent and emerging gaps to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Last week, I read a story about Amsha, a Yazidi woman from northern Iraq who was captured by Daesh in August. Amsha watched in horror as jihadi fighters separated the men. Her husband was ordered to lie face down on the ground. One by one the jihadists passed over the men and shot them in the head. The women were taken to Mosul and held prisoner with hundreds of other women and girls. Every day, men entered the room to pick out a girl. They sold Amsha for \$12. The man who bought her viciously raped and beat her. Stories such as that of Amsha are emerging every day. Their testimonies — forced conversions, forced marriage, sexual assault, displacement and slavery — are what we would expect to read about in the Dark Ages, not in the twenty-first century.

Daesh is just one of the radical extremist groups that seek to subjugate women. There is Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Qaida in Yemen, like-minded militias in Libya, Al-Shabaab in the East Africa, and Hamas in Gaza. They seek to control every area of a woman's life — how she dresses, where she goes, how she spends her money, who she marries and how many children she has. The Holy Bible tells us that there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens. It is therefore a great disappointment that where we see those vast injustices and atrocities towards women around the globe, as well as great opportunities for the advancement of women, a leading Arab country decided to use this forum to advance narrow political goals by attacking my country. The issue is far too important for all of us and there should be no politicization of the matter.

Around the world, women continue to be marginalized and minimized. Today, the majority of the world's poor are women. They earn only three-quarters as much as men and are frequently locked out of leadership and decision-making positions. The tragedy is that when women face barriers to achieving their potential, entire societies suffer. The truth of the matter is that women's economic empowerment lies at the heart of sustainable development. We know that, when a woman generates her own income, she reinvests 90 per cent of it in her family and community, and we know that eliminating gender gaps in labour force participation can lead to big jumps in income per capita. To put it more simply, when we boost the participation of women, we boost the growth potential of an entire nation. Supporting women's economic empowerment requires meaningful policy intervention, beginning with the inclusion of women in the decision-making process. Women bring unique ideas, priorities and expertise to bear on challenging political problems. Creating opportunities for women and girls advances security and prosperity for everyone.

Take Rwanda, for example. Rwanda's legal system guarantees equal rights in terms of land ownership and inheritance, and its Constitution enshrines gender equality. Thanks to that strategy, Rwanda tops the world for women in Parliament with 53 per cent in 2013, and the nation has made impressive progress towards reducing poverty and inequality.

Israel understands the tremendous benefits of investing in every member of society. We celebrate different ways of life, we value diversity, and we believe that every person should choose how to live his or her life. From the prophets Deborah to Miriam and Queen Esther, Jewish history is rich with female leaders. More recently, courageous women from Hannah Senesh to Dorit Beinisch have left their mark on the Jewish people and the Jewish State. In fact, our Declaration of Independence was signed by two women, Golda Meir and Rachel Cohen-Kagan, and Israel had a female Prime Minister before many other countries granted women the right to vote. In Israel, we understand that women's participation is a game changer. That is why two of the past three chief justices of our Supreme Court have been women, and the current Israeli Parliament has more women than ever before. In recent years, Israel has welcomed its first female Major General, elected a female Governor to our central bank, and three women were appointed to head our leading banks. Israeli women are agents of change, drivers of progress and makers of peace.

Given the chance, that could be true for all the world's women, but we have work to do. We must persist in our efforts to advance gender equality until all women can dress as they like, be educated as they choose, work where they wish, marry the person they love, raise their families as they see fit and make the choices that will determine the course of their lives. It is up to us to uphold those freedoms. So I urge everyone — all women and men who wish to see a more peaceful planet — to bet on women, invest in women, ensure that they have opportunities, support their right to be a part of the decision-making process. I promise that we will not be disappointed.