

Ms. Gamliel (Israel): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Chamber on this important topic. However, I feel compelled to begin by speaking out against the unrelenting campaign of terror being carried out against my people. In recent weeks, Israel has been rocked by a spate of violent attacks, stabbings, car bombs and fire bombs. Men, women, children and even infants have been targeted as they walk the streets or on their way home from prayer.

We would expect to hear loud condemnation of such violence, but when it comes to terror attacks on Israelis, the international community and the Council seem to lose their voice. Even this morning, I have heard fellow leaders in this Chamber talking about terrorism while not mentioning a word about terror in Israel, where today we are burying its latest victims.

Unfortunately, Israel is facing a generation of women, teens and even young children incited to hatred, martyrdom and killing innocents, and not to peace and coexistence. A 13-year old boy, instead of going to play outside, comes to kill after being brainwashed. A student who has her whole life in front of her comes to murder. As a woman and as a mother, I believe that education is the key to raising a generation of young people committed to understanding and tolerance. In

Israel, the very first words our children learn at school are *shalom* and *salam* — peace.

I am here today as Israel's Minister for Social Equality — a ministry established for the first time in Israel's history to deal with minorities and gender issues and to enhance Israel's efforts to fight prejudice and combat social inequality. Since its founding, Israel has been committed to a vision of a society of equal opportunities. Our Declaration of Independence guarantees equal rights for all citizens, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion.

We believe that women should be free to choose their own path in life, unhindered by barriers and bias. This freedom paves the way for a better and more stable society for all. In our efforts towards peace and security, Israel believes that women are powerful agents of moderation, particularly in the face of extremism. As leaders and decision-makers, we can be a stabilizing force. Especially in my region of the world, women are an untapped potential for more peaceful societies.

As part of our commitment to gender equality, Israel enacted legislation in 2005 that guarantees women's equal participation in public decision-making, peacebuilding, reconciliation and representation of women in all national policy issues. The inclusion of women is the key to opening the door to a sustainable peace. Mashav — Israel's Agency for International Development — has been actively training women from throughout the

world to equip them with the necessary leadership skills so they can hold senior positions in society. Israel's commitment to full participation has been recognized here at the United Nations. Israel is proud to have recently joined the 48 States members of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. Together, we will work to advance global progress towards women's empowerment.

The peace and prosperity of tomorrow depend on the path we take today. Gender equality and equal participation are the first steps on the road to conflict- resolution, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Israel is proud to join its partners on the march towards a new era in which women stand alongside men and lead the way to the lofty goals of peace and security.