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Panel Discussion: Access to Medicines (Res. 32/15)

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Thank you, Mr. President.

First allow me to thank the distinguished panelists for an enlightening presentation.

Reducing inequality in the healthcare system has for several years been a top priority of the Israel Health Ministry. The "1994 national health insurance law" already established a universal system of medical insurance, based on the principle that "every resident of Israel has a right to medical services."

One of the most important elements instated by this legislation is a mechanism encompassing the entire range of services, drugs, medical procedures and devices that the insured public has a right to receive. This mechanism, dubbed "the medical services basket", ensures access of the general public to a wide range of medicines, many of them life-saving and life-prolonging-though not exclusively.

Every year, new drugs and medical technologies are added to the health services basket through a complex process involving approval by the Ministry of Health, and the allocation of additional budgeting subject to a recommendation of a high-profile public committee comprising experts in medicine, economics, welfare and ethics.

During this yearlong process, recommendations of many different stakeholders including the patients themselves are collected. Rigorous evaluations of the safety and efficiency of the new drugs and technologies are conducted, and the socio-economic aspects are also considered, before decisions are made. Every year some 400 new technologies are submitted to the committee, and the decision which technologies will eventually get the funding is never an easy one. But the goal is to address society's various, and sometimes conflicting, needs in as balanced a way as possible.

In addition to improving access to medicines to the residents of Israel, the national health insurance law transformed the healthcare landscape in Israel in many other ways. For example, it increased social solidarity and made the system more community-based than before.

In conclusion, Israel is committed to continuing its efforts to reduce the gaps that still exist in its healthcare system, so as to address the challenges stemming from economic inequalities and the aging of the population.

I thank you Mr. President.