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**UN Human Rights Council**  
**41<sup>st</sup> Session, Item 3 – June 28, 2019**

**Annual Full Day discussion on the human rights of women**  
**Panel 2: The rights of older women and their economic empowerment**

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Thank you, Madam Vice-President.

Israel would like to thank the panelists and congratulate the Human Rights Council for embracing this important topic.

While the international community has come a long way in recognizing the rights of women, and the rights of elderly people, leading to the adoption of effective policy and legislation in many states, we believe the intersectional group of older women is still the victim of neglect and deserves greater focus.

The State of Israel has not only well-established legislation against the discrimination of women, but also has a robust body of policies on the support of elderly citizens. The field of housing has been identified as a critical challenge for the elderly population, and in November 2017, the Israeli government established an inter ministerial committee to propose housing solutions for the elderly population. Our social security system offers benefits to different subgroups of this population, such as immigrants, Holocaust survivors, or widows, according to their needs.

In this context, widowhood should be emphasized as an important factor of vulnerability. As was anciently recalled by the Hebrew Prophets, society's attitude towards widows and orphans is a measure of its moral standing, and in today's world, when life expectancies have been extended considerably, this issue is even more relevant. In a 2016 study by the Central Bureau of Statistics, it was found that for every widower man in Israel, there were five widows. For older women, who often matured in patriarchal contexts and did not enjoy many of the opportunities that were only recently opened to women, the passing of a spouse can quickly descend to economic hardship.

We would like to ask the panelists, in this context, how they suggest addressing the specific challenges faced by older women, and what are the key issues that demand a gendered approach to the care and empowerment of elderly people.

Madam Vice-President,

We should not forget the importance of representation and protagonism of older women themselves in promoting their rights. The Zionist movement and the State of Israel have always been a progressive force in challenging gender and age stereotypes, and Israeli older women are often strong and active. Not by chance, Prime-Minister Golda Meir was 70 years old when she took office, and was rarely seen as weak or vulnerable.

We thank you Madam Vice-President.