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**UN Human Rights Council**  
**45<sup>th</sup> Session, 14 September 2020**

**Item 2 – General Debate**

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Thank you, Madam President.

Today in a few hours in Washington DC Israel will sign an agreement which will normalize and establish full diplomatic relations both with the UAE and with Bahrain. This historic meeting reflects the changing dynamics in our region and the ongoing quest of our people for peace. Whereas wars and conflict take a terrible toll on human rights, peace in the Middle East will no doubt pave the way for their promotion. This is why we expect the international community, including the human rights system, to embrace such developments.

Normalization is needed not only when it comes to Israel's relations with its neighbors, but also in the context of the multilateral world. Discrimination against Israel in the UN system has reached an unacceptable level. It is high time for these old habits to be left behind.

Madam President,

As a new-comer, and as one who participated in the deliberations in NY in the year 2006, that created the Human Rights Council, I must say that I am very disappointed with how the council evolved. In 2006 the member states were hoping to create a body that will improve on its predecessor. I regret this did not happen. The institutional bias reflected in Item 7 is an ongoing testimony of this council's partiality and politicization against the state of Israel.

I regret that the OHCHR never tried to offset the deep bias of the HRC against Israel, and thus failed to fulfil its guiding principle of impartiality. The autonomy of the High Commissioner does not mean independence from the principles of fairness and equality.

I can only hope that the constructive winds blowing from our region will also change this mindset here in Geneva once and for all.

I thank you.