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**Panel Discussion on the Importance of Robust Public Policies and Services for the Protection of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Contributing to the COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery**

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Mr. President,

The Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences caused a dramatic change in various components of the Israeli welfare system. Initially, like other states, the actions of Israel focused on providing social protection and the expansion of its social security system. So Israel significantly increased spending on welfare in 2020.

Mr. President

In Israel, as in the rest of the world, Youth was the primary victim of unemployment stemming from the Covid-19 crisis. The high proportion of young people, both among recipients of unemployment benefits and among new registrants to the employment service, indicated the severe turmoil experienced by Younger Persons. However, they also represented a relatively high rate of those returning to the labor market between lockdowns, which shows a higher flexibility compared to other age groups.

Finally, one of the most significant challenges of this pandemic was the strain on people's mental health due, among others, to fatigue, uncertainty, isolation, prolonged exposure to the news, and a difficult economic situation. It is critical to recognize that the pandemic took its toll on all of us. Therefore, during the pandemic, Israel offered three individual sessions to all people free of charge to help those dealing with distress. This service was offered in many languages to maximize patients' comfort and ensure the best possible mental health care.

To conclude, considering that many of the measures taken by States around the world in response to the pandemic were of a transitional or temporal nature, Israel would like to ask the panelists: how could we transform them into more stables measures that help to build back better and prevention for future emergencies?

I thank you.