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**Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective
throughout the work of the Human Rights Council and that of its
mechanisms**

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Mr. President,

Israel welcomes the convening of this panel and thanks the panelists for their interventions on such an important topic.

Israel believes that in order to overcome gender-based barriers to freedom of opinion and expression, states need to work towards full gender equality, including placing high importance on equal gender participation in the public sphere, as well as placing gender equality as an integral part of states commitment to safeguarding human rights and equality.

Of particular importance to the promotion of freedom of opinion and expression of women is the representation of women in positions of influence and decision-making, for example, a significant representation of women in the political arena. Women in positions of influence can act as role models for girls and young women, and encourage them to make their own voices heard. The number of women elected to parliament has increased over the past decade, but sadly the reality is that in many countries, the proportion of women among elected officials is still extremely low.

States must ensure that girls and young women have a seat at the decision-making table and policy-making space. We must also ensure that their voices are meaningfully heard.

In addition, special emphasis must not only be placed on the education of girls, but also on the education of men and boys when it comes to addressing negative gender stereotypes and gender equality.

Lastly, states should place a special emphasis on the barriers faced by women with disabilities, as they experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, due to their gender, their disability and many other factors. These women sadly experience increased challenges in their attempt to gain freedom of opinion and expression, and countries must act more strongly to help them make their voices heard in every field.

I thank you.