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Israel

Adv. Dina Dominitz

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Mr. President,

My name is Dina Dominitz, and I am the Israeli National Coordinator for the combatting of Human Trafficking, Prostitution and Polygamy, and their harmful effects on persons in vulnerable situations in society, particularly women and children.

I had the privilege to take part in the last review, and listen to your comments and recommendations.

Israel has taken many important strides forward since then, both in adopting recommendations made in the previous UPR, and also in promoting several significant, innovative and sustainable mechanisms enhancing the protection, promotion and fulfillment of human rights.

First, the recent establishment of the new Social Rights Division in the Ministry of Justice, that I am honored to represent here today, encompassing several coordination units dealing with core human rights issues, in various spheres. In addition to the anti-trafficking unit, entrusted also with the issues of prostitution and polygamy, the division also includes the newly formed governmental coordination unit for the rights of children and youth, and the Ministerial coordination unit for matters pertaining to the Arab

population in Israel, promoting law enforcement, public security, equality and social development.

This division provides a holistic and effective mechanism, promoting a unified, victim-centered and gender-sensitive "whole of society" approach.

Second, In order to ensure a complete and multidisciplinary response to the diverse needs of children and youth, and recognizing the importance of hearing their voice in decision-making processes, the Government decided to appoint a Coordinator and a permanent Director General's Committee, to strengthen collaborations and form holistic policy.

Third - in tackling demand for prostitution- alongside the legislation criminalizing consumption of prostitution described by our co-head of delegation, the crucial and integral part of this Governmental reform, is the Government Resolution from 2019, which establishes a broad array of state funded aid Measures and exit programs, aimed at assisting persons in the cycle of prostitution, with respect to aspects of reintegration, treatment, education and public awareness, and establishing an inter-ministerial implementation team. I am the director of this team, which leads, in partnership with NGOs, a wide range of programs for children, youth and adults, of different gender identities and sexual orientations, and from a wide geographical distribution.

Moreover, a new program for persons with no status in prostitution was established, focusing on multi-faceted needs, and tailored for groups, such as asylum seekers, Palestinian women and LGBTQI persons. In addition, unique programs operated by NGO's such as Ma'avarim, are specifically geared for the needs of transgender persons.

Fourth- regarding progress in dealing with Polygamy - Five years ago, we reported on the inter-ministerial committee tasked with formulating a strategic plan to counter its negative repercussions. The committee, which included representatives of NGOs and the Bedouin population, formulated recommendations addressing empowerment of women, health, enforcement, education and treatment of women and children in polygamous marriages, and encouraging their integration in Israeli society.

The recommendations were adopted by the Government in 2018, and I was appointed as the national coordinator to strengthen collaborations and implementation.

Fifth- In the field of combatting human trafficking, Israel continues to take a leading role in the global efforts. We have reached outstanding achievements and have developed innovative and sustainable mechanisms, legislation and tools aimed at preventing trafficking, targeting the demand that fosters these heinous crimes, and prosecuting those who facilitate or profit from the exploitation of victims, holding them accountable. Nevertheless, as many other countries worldwide, we still face many challenges.

In response to Lichtenstein's advanced question about the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants, we intend to conduct an inter-ministerial process to consider ratifying this protocol.

In September 2022, the Government adopted the five-year Implementation Plan of the New National Plan for the Combat of Trafficking in Persons in all forms, encompassing 14 Government Ministries. This action plan reflects substantive progress in all spheres of Prosecution, Prevention and Protection, adapting many existing models to the current patterns, providing sustainable, victim-centered responses.

Furthermore, it includes a five-year research plan on the scope and characteristics of the patterns of Trafficking and evaluation of protection services, child forced labor, and other crucial areas.

One major development is a new Identification and Recognition process which is a proactive, victim-sensitive, holistic model that includes a consultative committee formed of members of the Government, NGOs and trafficking survivors.

Israel continues to emphasize, the importance of vigilance and social inclusion to the increased situation of vulnerability of persons belonging to specific groups such as women, children, foreign workers, LGBTQI persons, asylum seekers, and the Bedouin population.

Special focus is directed at preventing labor exploitation of Palestinian workers in Israel, and in particular the exploitative practice of illegal trade in the work permits, leading to violation of labor rights and exploitation.

A new Identification model at the national Ben-Gurion Airport was introduced shortly after Russia's attack on Ukraine due to concerns over heightened attempts to recruit to Israel women and children fleeing from the war, for purposes of sexual and labor exploitation. The new model established a proactive, rapid inter-ministerial cooperation for identification of Trafficking victims, including preliminary inquiry by the border control and Police, at the airport, accompanied by a dedicated trained social worker from an NGO who supports the potential victim during the inquiry and referral to protection services. Over 100 potential victims were identified so far.

In conclusion, I believe that these significant steps detailed, vividly reflect Israel's efforts, actions and determination to improve and uphold the rights of persons trapped in vicious exploitation situations of human trafficking, prostitution and polygamy, restoring the humanity and dignity that has been stolen from them.

This crucial goal must be a joint effort of the whole of the global community. An ancient Hebrew saying says- "he who has saved one soul, is considered as if he has saved the whole world". Together, we can save many souls.

Thank you.