



**Opening remarks of H.E. Ambassador Eviatar Manor,  
Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva,  
on the occasion of the opening of the Exhibition**

***“Women and Their Olive Trees”***

Cultural Event organized by the Permanent Missions of Israel, UNOG, WIZO Switzerland  
Palais des Nations, Mezzanine (Building E)  
Geneva, 15 March 2016

---

Dear Mr. Pisano, Chief of the UNOG Library and Chair of the Cultural Activities  
Committee,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

I think I can speak on behalf of all the delegates attending the Human Rights  
Council when I say: “Thank God, there is a break (and food)”!

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I open today this beautiful exhibition. It is an  
artistic expression which exposes the rich diversity composing Israeli society,  
and carries a strong message of hope. Olive trees and women are both  
symbolic and essential to Peace, prosperity and social justice.

For me, olive trees have three important characteristics. First, the olive is one  
of the seven species the Holy land is blessed with, according to the Bible.  
Second, it is a common heritage of all the peoples and geographical regions of  
the Mediterranean Basin. Thirdly, it is the symbol of peace, which we hope to  
enjoy in our corner of the world sooner rather than later.

Olives were, and continue to be, symbolic and essential to the fabrics of society and life in the Middle East.

A week ago, we marked the International Day for Women's Rights.

Gender equality is enshrined in Israel's 1948 Declaration of Independence and has been implemented through law and policy. Several women held and continue to hold leadership roles in political parties and ministries; they also comprise about half of our academia and our judiciary; and constitute more than 35% of the total workforce in high-tech.

Much remains to be done to ensure full enjoyment of equal rights by women in Israel, especially in the workplace. Indeed, it is not acceptable that women earn 21% less on average than men. This inequality, common to most countries around the world, must be rectified.

To me, women empowerment is not a slogan. It is an essential component of peace. Women in the workforce will contribute to economic growth, demographic revolutions will contribute to prosperity and development, and education will unchain the shackles imposed by religion and male dominance in our region. Tell me if you think these crucial developments will not contribute to peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank UNOG for hosting this exhibition for the next two weeks, thus opening a window on the rich cultural and ethnic diversity that is Israel for the delegates attending the Council.

Let me also express my deepest appreciation to WIZO. The exhibition "Women and their Olive Trees", initiated by the WIZO Community Center of Afula, is a beautiful example of the outstanding contribution by WIZO to the empowerment of women and gender equality in Israel and around the world since 1920.

I sincerely hope that you will appreciate these paintings, and that you will carry with you the message of hope and peaceful coexistence that these 35 Israeli women embody.

Thank you.