



Mission permanente d'Israël  
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies  
et des Organisations Internationales à Genève

משלחת ישראל  
ליד משרד האומות המאוחדות  
והארגונים הבינלאומיים בג'נבה

**Speech by Ambassador Eviatar Manor  
Permanent Representative of Israel  
to the United Nations Office in Geneva**

**Before the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the UPR Working Group  
*Review of Israel's report***

**29 October 2013**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to introduce Israel's delegation to our second Universal Periodic Review:

Ambassador Eviatar Manor  
Permanent Representative  
Permanent Mission of Israel, Geneva  
Head of the Delegation

Mr. Shai Nitzan  
Deputy Attorney General (*Special Affairs*)  
Ministry of Justice, Jerusalem

Ms. Hila Tene-Gilad, Adv.  
Director, Human Rights and Relations with International Organization  
The Department for International Agreements and Litigation  
Ministry of Justice, Jerusalem

Mr. Daniel Meron  
Head of Bureau, UN & International Organizations Division  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem

Mr. Ohad Zemet  
Attorney, International Law Department Office of the Legal Advisor  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem

Mr. Nir Keidar, Adv.  
International Law Department  
Israel Defense Forces

Mr. Omer Caspi  
Minister-Counselor, Deputy Permanent Representative  
Permanent Mission of Israel, Geneva

Ms. Jennifer Motles Svigilsky  
Human Rights & Humanitarian Affairs Officer  
Permanent Mission of Israel, Geneva

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

The Israeli delegation comes to its second UPR with strong reservations regarding the Human Rights Council. The discrimination against, and the unfair treatment of, Israel continues. The infamous Item 7 still features on the agenda of every Council session and Israel is not a member of any geographical group. In the 2013 March session, there were six (6) one-sided resolutions against Israel, compared with four (4) other country resolutions, while a vast array of systematic violations of human rights worldwide failed to merit a resolution. In the years since the establishment of the Council, Israel was subject to more emergency sessions as well as more Fact-Finding Missions than any other single country in the world.

In March 2012, we said – “enough”. Israel suspended its relations with the Council and with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In June 2013, I wrote to the President of the Council to re-affirm to him my intention to continue my dialogue with him and pursue a diplomatic engagement with a view to positively resolve all outstanding issues in Israel’s complex relationship with the Human Rights Council. The results of this dialogue and the still ongoing engagement, have allowed Israel to appear today and undergo the UPR. It was not an easy decision to make. Israel made its decision because we respect UN Resolutions, human rights in general and human rights mechanisms in particular. I will continue my efforts to restore our relations with the Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. But Israel’s unfair treatment must come to an end. I hope our appearance here today will go a long way to restore equality and fairness regarding Israel in Geneva, and I am confident our continued diplomatic engagement will eventually allow our return to full activity within the Council as well as with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We come to the UPR with respect for the process, belief in the importance of its universality and cooperative nature, and with great pride in our achievements. We are certainly not perfect, and we believe the UPR, as well as our periodic reports to the core human rights treaty bodies, will result in further improvements in the protection and promotion of human rights in Israel.

The national report submitted by the State of Israel to the Human Rights Council for this second cycle is based on the results of consultations between a wide range of government ministries and agencies, and addresses both those recommendations that Israel has agreed to adopt or has taken upon itself to promote in its first cycle in 2008, as well as many others.

Israel's national report is structured around three chapters. The first chapter looks at normative and institutional developments and most notably the ratification by Israel in 2012 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Peoples with Disabilities. This ratification signifies another milestone in the promotion of a disability rights agenda in Israel and worldwide, throughout the last decade.

The second chapter presents progress and best practices in the promotion and protection of human rights by the State of Israel. The chapter looks at a vast array of rights, noting its success stories and achievements. While the list is long, it is worth noting Israel's achievements in promoting and protecting the rights of the LGBT community, for example promoting the rights of same-sex couples in Israel in various aspects such as parental rights, the prohibition of any discrimination and the right to benefit as a recognized spouse.

The third and final chapter of the national report looks at challenges, constraints and opportunities. The main challenge Israel is facing is our relations with the Palestinians. Recent resumption of direct negotiations for peace, headed by US Secretary of State John Kerry, are a welcome step. As Prime Minister Netanyahu stated, and I quote, "Israel continues to seek an



historic compromise with our Palestinian neighbors, one that ends our conflict once and for all...I remain committed to achieving an historic reconciliation and building a better future for Israelis and Palestinians alike” end of quote. In this context, I would like to point out that Israel has agreed to release Palestinian prisoners as a Confidence Building Measure. A second group of prisoners is being released tonight. All of them have blood on their hands; all of them have murdered Israelis. Their release, I believe, illustrates Israel’s determination to reach an agreement with our Palestinian neighbors that will, once and for all, end the conflict.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Throughout history, Jews have been victims of injustice, discrimination, forced displacement and violence and of mass murder during the Shoah. They immigrated to Israel to create a society that would enshrine protection against human rights abuses and establish a democratic system of government based on the rule of law.

In our Declaration of Independence it is written, and I quote, “the State of Israel will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all inhabitants, irrespective of religion, race or sex. It will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the holy places of all religions and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations”.

Our engagement with human rights bodies and mechanisms reflect these principles. Israel is a party to the core human rights treaty bodies, and we have since 2009 and up to 2013, completed the examination by the expert groups of six treaty bodies. Moreover, during 2011, Israel hosted the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression. Israel has also hosted the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing in February 2012, and the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict in 2009.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Since its establishment, the State of Israel had to balance a difficult and complex security situation with democratic traditions and the respect for human rights. Israel had to fight numerous wars, endure armed conflicts and overcome waves of terror. We find ourselves in a geopolitical environment where violence, political instability and conflicts are common place.

Such challenges strain the delicate balance between the effective steps necessary to overcome the various threats to a state's security and the protection of human rights.

As former President of the Israel Supreme Court Aharon Barak said, and I quote: "This is the fate of democracy, as not all means are acceptable to it, and not all methods employed by its enemies are open to it. Sometimes, a democracy must fight with one hand tied behind its back", end of quote.

To conclude, our record is before you. It is not a perfect record. We are here today to listen to your comments and recommendations which we shall study closely. We shall report on implementation of recommendations received during the First Cycle of the UPR. We are grateful for the opportunity to engage in the interactive dialogue. Ensuring human rights is an ongoing process and Israel's appearance before this Working Group is a testimony to our daily effort to uphold the highest standards of human rights.

Mr. President, I will now pass on the baton to my colleague, Mr. Shai Nitzan, the Deputy Attorney-General for Special Affairs of the State of Israel, to proceed with his presentation.