



94-09-08: Statement of Israel, H.E. Dr. Baruch Levy

ISO: ISR

The electronic preparation of this document has been done by the
Population Information Network(POPIN) of the United Nations Population
Division in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme

AS WRITTEN

Address to the international Conference

On Population and Development (ICPD)

Cairo, Egypt 8 September 1994

Dr.Baruch LEYY

Head of the delegation of Israel

Mr. President, distinguished delegates.

The delegation of Israel to the international conference on population
and development, wishes to express its sincere thanks and appreciation
to our great neighbor Egypt for hosting the conference. We also wish to
thank the United Nations authorities and in particular Dr. Nafis Sadik,
the Executive Director of UN Population Fund, on their very important
task related to the development of the world population .

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The state of Israel has been making every effort to base its population policy on solid foundation of the concept of welfare state. The development of advanced infrastructure of health and social security system is central to our social policy.

We assume the responsibility to ensure adequate quality of life and provision of the necessary services to all.

An effort is made to find the appropriate balance between the responsibilities of the government as stated above and those of the citizen, in order to ensure population development in accordance with the economic capacity.

The government of Israel maintains a child welfare policy based on responsible parenthood while respecting the free choice of couples and individuals regarding their family size. Our aim and practice are to base this on two major principles:

I) Guarding the rights of the newly born children and ensuring the necessary conditions for their up bringing.

2) Insuring the rights of the woman .

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to achieve these goals, legislative steps have been taken by

the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, with respect to the status of women.

Several examples may be mentioned:

1) The "equal job opportunities law", passed in 1988, which contributed towards equal rights for women.

2) The "single parent families law", passed in 1992, recognized social benefits to women in these conditions.

3) Parental leave from work for either mothers or fathers, to take care of a sick child and to take leave after the birth of a child.

4) Participation of women in the national service.

Education and counseling regarding family life, parenthood and sexual behavior, have been expanding in the last twenty years. Modern contraceptives are legal and in general easily available to those who wish to make use of them. Also, medical insurance covers infertility treatment.

I should stress that in Israel abortion is not considered a part of family planning. Efforts are being made through education and counseling, to reduce un-necessary abortions. Nevertheless, according to a law of the Knesset, passed in 1977, abortions are legal when performed in authorized medical institutions and approved by special abortion committees. The overwhelming majority of requests for legal abortions are, in fact, approved for health and certain social; reasons.

A presentation regarding population development in Israel is never complete

without mentioning the major social task of absorption of new immigrants. Israel's centrality to the Jewish people has brought in the course of its existence big waves of new-comers. Just in the last five years, the country absorbed close to 600,000 (six hundred thousands) immigrants mainly from the former Soviet Union and also from Ethiopia, amounting to about twelve percents of Israel's total population. Hence, beside the responsibility to provide the new immigrants with the ,basic social services, including housing education, medical care and employment, there is also a need to integrate the new- comers into the Israeli society, with regard modern family planning.

Being a relatively young state, Israel is trying to maintain a moderate steady population growth in order to further develop the socio-economic foundations for a healthy community.

Principles such as strengthening the family through responsible parenthood, education and provision of adequate social services benefits are implemented. An array of NGO's and human rights movements, balance and complement the government agencies, which have to take into account religious and cultural diversities as well. There are still relevant areas to be addressed and developed. We hope that the present process of changing relations with neighbors, will foster regional cooperation and a better quality of life for all the people in the area.

Thank you and Shalom to you all.

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