
Check Against Delivery

Statement by

H.E. Silvan Shalom, Vice Prime Minister of Israel

Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

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United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development
Statement on behalf of Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of Israel,
H.E. Mr. Silvan Shalom
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Mr. President,

The book of Kohelet says: "דֹּר הַלֵּךְ וְדֹר בָּא וְהָאָרֶץ לְעֹלָם עֹמֶדֶת"

“One generation goes and another generation comes; but the Earth endures forever”.

We are gathered here today to ensure that generations to come will inherit the promise of a prosperous planet, and a sustainable world.

Working in partnership, the international community has achieved extraordinary things.

However, much work remains to be done.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks a new era of unprecedented global partnership; today, we dedicate ourselves to combat the greatest global challenge- the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

Mr. President,

I have witnessed firsthand how determination and innovation can make the desert bloom and society flourish.

As a child, I lived with my family in Beersheva, a dry and arid town in the middle of the Negev desert. Today, Beersheva, the capital of the Negev, is a thriving city, home to one of Israel’s leading universities and an emerging hub for sustainable technology.

It is hard to believe that from swamplands and sand dunes, Israel has become a source of innovation and creativity, known to many as the "start-up nation".

From energy and water to health and education, Israel has developed cutting-edge technologies that turn salt water into fresh water, converts waste into renewable energy and detects preventable diseases with the touch of a button.

In Israel, we learned to make every drop of water count. Israel is a world leader in water technology, home to one of the biggest desalination facilities in the world. We re-use 87% of our waste water, ten times more than most other countries.

Drip irrigation was invented in Israel. We have exported this and other innovative technologies to tens of countries around the globe.

For over 50 years, MASHAV - Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation – has deployed Israeli scientists, doctors, engineers, and teachers all over the world, to share their expertise. To date, Israel has trained over a quarter million professionals from 132 countries, helping them become agents of change in their own communities.

Israel's vision of sustainable development stems from the Jewish principle of "אור לגויים" or "being a light unto the nations" – the moral and social obligation to share our knowledge and experience with others, so that no nation would have to face the overwhelming challenges of development alone.

Mr. President,

Albert Einstein once said: "All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual."

As we move forward with our new agenda, we must not lose sight of the individuals in our societies who have been denied equal opportunity for development.

Women and girls constitute half of our society, yet around the world they continue to face deep inequalities in every area of life.

We must create a new reality, one in which women and girls can participate on an equal footing with men and boys in their economies, their communities, and their families.

Israel strongly believes that eradication of poverty and sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality and women's empowerment.

Youth is also one of Israel's top priorities. People under the age of thirty account for more than half of the world population and most of them live in the developing world.

As we implement our new agenda, we must find ways to harness their talent and energy so that they can become the masters of their own future.

We need all hands on deck to address the challenges we face. We must give a voice to the unheard and shine a spotlight on the unseen.

Mr. President,

There are few regions of the world that can benefit more from the new agenda than the Middle East. However, as long as the countries of the region choose to invest in violence instead of investing in their own people, there can be no hope for a better future.

Israel's success story highlights the link between development, free societies and prosperous nations. In contrast, the situation in neighboring countries highlights just the opposite- that lack of development leads to war, poverty and oppression.

Yesterday, the Palestinian foreign minister stood here in front of you and blamed Israel for all the ills of their society. This would be surprising if it wasn't so predictable. After all, it is much easier to point fingers at others than to point the mirror at yourself.

I look forward to the day when Palestinian leaders place the welfare of their people above warfare with Israel; a day when they will stop making false accusations and start making a real effort to improve the lives of their children and future generations.

Only when that day comes, will they be able to realize the goals of the new Agenda and enjoy the fruits of sustainable development.

Israel has repeatedly extended its hand in kinship and cooperation. Sadly, our hand has all too often been rejected. Today, once again, from this podium, I call on our Arab neighbors to forsake destruction and despair, and walk together on the path of prosperity and peace.

Mr. President,

Tonight, the Jewish people will celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. On Sukkot, families come together to live in temporary dwellings, in order to remember the 40-year journey of the people of Israel through the desert towards the Promised Land.

As we begin our own journey towards the promise of sustainable development, let us come together, so that generations to come will dwell in a sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful world.

Thank you