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Statement by

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

When it comes to sustainable transportation in Israel, rising standards of living coupled with a significant growth in population pose especially complex challenges. The number of motor vehicles has grown steadily, reaching more than 2.5 million in 2009 compared to just over a million in 1990. For Israel, increased car ownership presents a twofold challenge for sustainable transport. First, to provide better road infrastructure in order to reduce traffic congestion and accidents; and second, to develop efficient and affordable public transport.

One of the most significant developments in recent years is the massive allocation of financial resources towards public transport at a scale previously unknown in Israel. The most dramatic developments occurred in the railroad network which grew by 1300% increase in passengers in less than two decades – from 2.5 million passengers in 1990 to 35 million in 2009. This increase was largely due to a government decision in 2003 to invest \$7 billion in a multi-year program in order to establish rail links between nearly all cities in Israel.

Mass transit projects, including light rail and bus rapid transit, are currently at different stages of planning and implementation in Israel's three principal metropolitan areas: Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa. However, at the same time, we recognize the fact that private vehicles are a reality in modern society and that efforts must therefore be made to accommodate their effects.

A national action plan for the reduction of pollutant emissions from vehicles was approved by a government decision in October 2007. The decision calls on the relevant ministries to take a variety of steps, including setting mandatory emission standards for smoke emissions from diesel vehicles and carbon monoxide emissions from gasoline-powered vehicles, using a differential tax on vehicles based on a "green index" giving preference in tenders for service vehicles in government agencies to fuel-efficient, environment friendly vehicles; and setting significant economic incentives for promoting alternatives fuels that are not oil-based, as well as diesel substitutes.

We have begun to implement many of these standards, as well as other recommendations, such as:

- Adopting EURO 5 standards for new vehicles imported into Israel;
- Promoting green commuting to the workplace;
- Implementing a vehicle retirement program to remove old, polluting vehicles from Israel's roads; and

- Promoting the introduction of electric vehicles into Israel, through the provision of a network of charge spots and battery switch stations by a private company.

While reducing vehicles environmental impact remains critical, an equally important challenge relates to increased road capacity by means of more efficient use of existing infrastructure. Through the establishment of an Intelligent Transport Systems for traffic control and management, and improved transport planning through the introduction of Context Sensitive Solutions, we are able to minimize the social and environmental negative impacts of transport activities.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel's non-governmental organizations have also taken an important role in promoting green transport in Israel, especially in terms of promoting public transportation, biking and carpooling. Thanks to the joint efforts of different organizations, Israeli employers increasingly understand that corporate responsibility should extend to green commuting, and several large companies are in the process of preparing Employer Transport Plans.

To summarize, Israel's unique economic and demographic characteristics present a real challenge for policy makers. Adjusting the transport sector to these special circumstances requires long-term planning and allocation of substantial economic resources. Israel is currently working toward the implementation of a balanced transport policy that can provide a meaningful solution to growing demand while addressing sustainable environmental needs, reducing congestion and increasing road safety.

Thank you!