
1st Global Refugee Forum

Plenary

Statement delivered by Ambassador Aviva Raz Shechter
Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva

18 December 2019 – Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Mr. High Commissioner,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

At the outset, I would like to thank UNHCR for organizing this important event. We would like to join many others in commending the work of UNHCR.

Israel absorbed mass immigration from its very establishment, including hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees, and managed to integrate people from many different parts of the world into one cohesive and vibrant society.

Mr. High Commissioner,

We share the view that a diversified toolbox is necessary to confront the huge challenge of displacement. In this regard, we completely agree that development should go hand in hand with humanitarian action. We believe this is an important step if we are really committed to “leaving no one behind”.

Mr. High Commissioner,

Israel puts a special emphasis on taking care of asylum seekers and those living in Israel protected by *non refoulement*. Every child is entitled to free

education from the age of 3 until the age of 18, as any other Israeli citizen. In addition, every they can receive affordable and good quality health services, and in case of medical emergency they receive full-treatment free of charge.

Mr. High Commissioner,

We would like to share with you some of the programs developed in Israel, either directly by State authorities, or by its vibrant civil society and innovative private sector, both at national and municipal levels.

Regarding vocational training, as a means to acquire practical skills and competences at a high level that can enable the penetration into the labor market worldwide, NGOs developed a “**3 Months Coding Vocational Training**”, addressing the demand of the central Israeli economic sector, particularly, the Israeli high tech sector facing an apparent shortage of software engineers and developers. Asylum seekers are integrated in a 3-month-long coding training program that seeks to integrate them into the workforce, while, laying the foundation for asylum seekers to pursue a professional path in tech-concentrated careers upon successful completion of the program.

It is worth mentioning that there is a growing collaboration between academic institutions and NGOs in order to create new programs and partnerships with other countries and share best practices.

The Government of Israel, together with the **Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI)** have been collaborating in order to create better conditions for foreign workers from various countries and asylum seekers from Africa. **The Aid and Information Center (MESILA)** is a municipal social service by the City of Tel Aviv, where most of the asylum seekers live, that provides support to individuals and families by social workers, students, and volunteers. The Center focuses in assistance on

education, health, family, employment, housing, legal status, pregnancy and childbirth, children at risk, humanitarian cases and referral for legal support.

Finally, I would like to highlight the important role that **Mashav, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, plays in promoting international cooperation, and sharing Israel's expertise with other countries who can benefit from it, including host countries and refugee communities. In this regard, MASHAV's International Agricultural Training Center 'MATC' focuses on training programs surrounding human capacity building within the spectrum of water management, agriculture, rural development, and environment conducting regional, international, as well as country-specific workshops, courses, conferences and professional study tours. These programs are designed to transform and improve the agricultural production in developing countries, to establish international cooperation and partnerships for sustainable development, as well as to promote food security. Some of the courses include a **Water Management and Modern Irrigation Technologies Course**, an **Agricultural Development in Arid Regions Course**, and the **Urban Water Technologies and Management Course**, among others.

Mr. High Commissioner,

While we welcome the opportunity to have a dialogue among different stakeholders, we are concerned that some delegations, including one of the co-conveners, have decided to politicize these deliberations. If the real aim of this forum is to work together and to foster cooperation towards a better protection of refugees, blunt accusations and politicization have no place in this room. Otherwise, this forum loses its focus and ultimate goal to protect and improve the lives of so many who truly need it.

Thank you.