UNGA: Indigenous Affairs

### Israel - Quinten Beelik

**Indigenous Peoples, Healthcare, Mental Health, and Wellness**

Israel has always been a world leader in the field of medical advancements and applications. Israel is one of the healthiest nations of the world boasting high life expectancy, low infant mortality rates and a high 3.1:1000 physician to patient ratio. According to Bloomberg Rankings research Israel is the 6th healthiest nation in the world and has the 8th most efficient healthcare system in the developed world as of 2014[[1]](#footnote-1). In 1995 Israel took the proper steps towards making it’s healthcare accessible to all members of its society by passing the “Israel National Health Insurance Law”. Under this two-tier system all Israeli citizens gained the right to healthcare mandated by the government[[2]](#footnote-2), exemplifying Israel’s commitment to providing healthcare to all people indiscriminately. Israel continues to contribute to the broadening of available medical resources through its flourishing “medical tourism” industry which provides care for foreigners who require services not offered in their homeland. The most notable result of this “medical tourism” is the prompted collaboration between the Israeli government and the local minorities in Palestinian regions. Through “medical tourism” programs established between the Israeli government and the Palestinian authority[[3]](#footnote-3), Israel has been able to ensure that not just Jewish indigenous populations receive healthcare but Arab ones as well. It is of the utmost importance to Israel that all people receive the proper healthcare they require. Israel would encourage other UN member to take a similar responsible approach to Israel’s in ensuring that all indigenous populations are looked after properly.

Israel is very sympathetic to the plight of the Indigenous people’s of the world as the Jewish people have also been marginalized throughout human history. Israel believes it is important that the international community works towards fully integrating all the indigenous groups of the world to ensure everyone is looked after. That being said, Israel would like to emphasize the importance of the UN not overstepping its bounds and interfering in a nation’s domestic affairs. It is ultimately a country’s own responsibility to ensure its people have full access to all the healthcare services they require. Israel believes the most constructive way in which the UN can ensure the world’s indigenous populations are better taken care of through an advisory role rather than being directly involved. The UN could execute this strategy by creating a framework/template for national policy which would work towards better integrating indigenous peoples into the health care system. Said template legislation would include strategies such as: the means for medical outreach to isolated groups, the encouragement of the use of traditional healers, suggested educational programs on metal health, etc. This would function in a similar fashion as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They would not be a binding legislation but rather a tool which states can use to ensure states’ policies appropriately suit the needs of their Indigenous populations. Should this approach be taken forward it would be a great step for the medical welfare of the world’s indigenous populations while respecting the sovereignty of UN states their respective citizens.

**Indigenous Land Rights, Climate Change impacts and Environmental Protection of Resources**

Climate change is a severe problem which is causing a multitude of conundrums across the world socially, economically and politically. Climate change’s effects on the world’s indigenous populations are no exception. Indigenous peoples are often one of the most vulnerable groups to the problems caused by their isolation, insufficient access to modern technology as well as lack of legal status and land rights.

In 2009 Israel enacted Governmental Decision No. 474[[4]](#footnote-4). Through this legislation the Israeli government encouraged all environmental experts to begin collecting data in order to facilitate the creation of a national adaption program. All scientific reports and results of said governmental decision were consolidated in 2011 in the creation of the Israeli Climate Change Information Centre. The ICCIC brings together approximately 100 representatives from government, academic, industrial, as well as NGOs in order to gather and analyze information in order to better understand the many effects climate change will have on Israel as a whole[[5]](#footnote-5). The ICCIC’s main objective is to advise the government of environmental policy and Israel’s national climate change plan on a non-partizan level. By taking this responsible approach, Israel was able to develop an in depth national climate change plan which allows it to anticipate and adapt to the multitude of complications caused by climate change.

Taking action against climate change on a multilateral scale is a clear step in the right direction for ensuring the protection of the world’s indigenous populations. Israel would encourage the debate in upcoming sessions to be centred around addressing the root causes of climate change as a solution to the problems which stem from it. The suggested method in doing so would the creation of both international and national level climate change adaptation plans. This could be accomplished through the creation of non-partizan research institutions, which could advise of future environmental policy. The system proposed has seen high levels of effectiveness in Israel and would likely seem similar results elsewhere. Naturally, different nations would have adaptation plans suited to their citizens needs which should most certainly include the various indigenous groups a country might have. Should this occur it would most certainly help in the reduction of global climate change, but also in indigenous people’s ability to adapt and ajdust in changing conditions.

**Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development**

Poverty from within, unfortunately has been a very serious problem within Israel in recent years. Approximately 22% of the Israeli population lives under the poverty line with a majority of the demographic being made up of children[[6]](#footnote-6). Even despite prosperous economic growth in Israel poverty rates continue to rise as wage gaps between classes increase. Poverty has become a difficult problem for both Jewish and Arab indigenous populations. Israel has climbed to second highest poverty rate among OECD countries only falling behind Mexico[[7]](#footnote-7). Israel recognizes that both Arab and Jewish indigenous populations are suffering due to poor economic situations.

Considering Israel’s own domestic problems concerning the economic development of its indigenous peoples Israel would encourage debate to find long lasting solutions to combat poverty. Many support systems are already in place to help in improving the economic situations for indigenous populations. The most effective way in tackling a complex international issue such as poverty would be to utilize currently existing support systems, while additionally improving through future UN development policies. It should be noted that cooperation with NGO currently already working on this topic would be very beneficial. Through the applications of these systems we will be better equipped to solve problems of poverty and development in indigenous communities in the years to come.

1. “Most Efficient Health Care 2014: Countries” - Bloomberg Best (and Worst)". Bloomberg. 25 August 2014. Accessed November 5 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. "An Overview of Israel's Universal Health Care System." LDI. August 2014. Accessed November 05, 2016. http://ldi.upenn.edu/news/overview-israels-universal-health-care-system. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. "Israel's Hospitals Continue to Treat Gazan Patients." The Jerusalem Post. November 19, 2012. Accessed November 05, 2016. http://www.jpost.com/Health-and-Science/Israels-hospitals-continue-to-treat-Gazan-patients. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. "Israeli Climate Change Information Center." Sviva.gov. October 12, 2015. Accessed November 05, 2016. http://www.sviva.gov.il/English/env\_topics/climatechange/Adaptation/Pages/ClimateChangeInformationCenter.aspx. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. "Climate Change Adaptation." Sviva.gov. June 4, 2016. Accessed November 05, 2016. http://www.sviva.gov.il/English/env\_topics/climatechange/Adaptation/Pages/default.aspx. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gravé-Lazi, Lidar. "Annual Report Paints Grim Picture of Poverty in Israel." The Jerusalem Post. December 9, 2015. Accessed November 05, 2016. http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/1-in-5-people-living-in-poverty-in-Israel-436770. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Michel, Dirk, and Claudia Schertges. "Poverty in Israel." SW&S. 2007. Accessed November 05, 2016. http://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/114/403. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)