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To: Ms. Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons

**Older Persons and the Right to Adequate Housing**

The Department of Senior Citizens in the Ministry of Social Equality is charged with the promotion of rights of older persons. Upon reaching retirement age (62 for women, 67 for men), the majority of this population prefer to remain in their own home (97%), whereas the rest (3%) favor to move to various forms of housing, primarily assisted living facilities. Based on the character of this target population, the Ministry's vision is to ***advance and support a broad range of forms of housing, in order to create a variety of adjusted and*** ***affordable solutions, allowing senior citizens to choose the form of housing best suited for*** ***them***. The strategies for achieving this goal include: the increase of supply of smaller apartments on the private market; the increase of supply of long-term rental apartments; the advancement of affordable assisted living facilities; the support of the "*aging in place*" approach, through the development of modular comprehensive services; and the development and ensuring of accessibility of various innovative forms of housing.

In each one of the aforesaid, there are various advantages and benefits which are directed at a broad range of profiles of senior citizens, and together, they create a broad response to a socio-economically diverse population, as well as to its different stages of mental and physical functionality.

The policy adopted by the Ministry is not one of separatism and the allocation of exclusive solutions for older persons, since that might increase ageism and place them in an inferior position. Rather, the Ministry promotes general vital housing solutions, with the exception of affordable assisted living, that would benefit older persons among other entitled sections of the population. In order to achieve these goals, the Ministry of Social Equality closely cooperates with the Ministry of Construction and Housing, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, the Government Authority for Urban Renewal and with the governmental company “*Dira LeHaskir*”.

On a national policy level, the State of Israel strives to make necessary preparations, including the development of the housing sector, ahead of the aging of the population. Following Government Resolution No. 3237 from 2018, an Inter-ministerial Committee for Advancing Solutions of Assisted Living submitted a report, which outlined the framework of the activities of all relevant ministries in the matter, and determined the main issues regarding the development of adequate housing for older persons. Also following the Committee's report, the Ministry of Social Equality conducted a research study regarding housing requirements and preferences among older persons in Israel, in order to formulate a strategic framework of modular comprehensive services. Additionally, the Ministry initiated group meetings with older persons, seeking to advance community housing, and remove economic and planning barriers in favor of promoting the long-term institutional rental market, and increasing the supply of housing in Israel. Together with the Ministry of Construction and Housing and the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Equality has promoted Government Resolution No. 204, which determined that the long-term institutional rental would be extended to 20 years.

The Ministry also operates, on a regular basis a call-center for older persons, who may contact it on any matter and receive assistance. This call-center is an additional platform through which the Ministry maintains regular contact with older persons, allowing them to express their opinions.

In addition to the State's efforts to increase the supply of affordable apartments available both for purchase and long-term rent, along with the efforts of the Ministry of Social Equality and the Ministry of Construction and Housing to advance high quality and affordable assisted living facilities, local authorities and various organizations promote independent living arrangements for older persons. Some of the most notable examples are:

1. The Harish Group, a group consisting of older persons from all over the country, who organized to lease apartments in a single building, in the town of Harish. This initiative inspired other groups to adopt similar housing formats, which often include a diverse range of apartments and communal public areas.
2. The Gil Senior Citizens’ Residences in Kfar Saba, exemplifies a unique housing model, where the local authority has allocated land, at its expense, and built a facility consisting of small apartments for perpetual lease at a subsidized cost for residents over the age of 65.
3. The CHI Co-Housing Israel Non-Profit Organization is an additional example of a unique group that organized as a cooperative society.

Since the State of Israel is a relatively young country, and the encounter with the unique requirements of older persons is considerably new, the greatest challenge is raising awareness of the population of senior citizens as an active and productive population, yet with its own particular needs. At the same time, the Ministry of Social Equality deals with ageism both among the general population and within older persons themselves.

In the context of the housing sector, it should be noted that the supply of housing solutions in central locations, with high accessibility to services, is relatively smaller than their demand, which increases their cost, in a manner that might intersect older persons' enjoyment of the right to adequate housing, accessible to public transportation, health and social services. On the other hand, peripheral localities unfortunately still suffer from inferiority of services, such as lesser health services, reduced employment opportunities and second-rate transportation, social and community services.

Particular attention must be given to older LGBTQ persons, which, just like other elderly people, have to deal, as they grow older, with a deteriorating health condition and with changes in their family and social situation. However, among the elderly LGBTQ population, these difficulties are intensified, and it is much more difficult for these people to receive assistance in dealing with these problems, because many LGBTQ adults have experienced, during their lifetime, a negative attitude from society, and they find it difficult to integrate into service frameworks for the older.

In areas of urban renewal, age and frequently socio-economic status might be a source for the discrimination of resident older persons. Since urban renewal may be detrimental to the quality of life of older persons, the Ministry of Social Equality and the Urban Renewal Authority, which is also charged with caring for residents of urban renewal projects, holds round table meetings in order to promote the interests of this population.

In this context, the law regulating evacuation and construction projects has been amended, updating the threshold of reasonableness of a "refusing tenant" and what is deemed to be a reasonable refusal. Moreover, additional housing alternatives have been introduced, addressing senior citizens over the age of 75 years.