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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for allowing me to share Israel's experience with this distinguished forum.

As environmentalists, our policy toolbox is full of different and varied tools. In Israel, we would mainly use the regulatory and legislative tools to implement environmental policy. Only in recent years, have we included additional tools such as economic instruments, educational tools, community involvement, and partnerships with the private sector and our very active civil society.

In recent years, the involvement of the private sector has increased, and has enabled Israel to promote environmental improvements without placing a burden on public budget. Our experience was shared when a workshop was organized by the UNECE's Division of Economic Cooperation and Integration and the Government of Israel. The workshop that took place in Israel June 2007, emphasized the benefits of partnerships in different fields including the environment. The first large size desalination plant in Israel, was built by BOT – build, operate and transfer method, using international financing according to Government plans, standards and guidance. Today this plant supplies 100 million cubic meters of drinking water per year and is one of the largest in the world. The price paid for this water is cheaper than what was estimated before building the plant. These partnerships building this and other environmental infrastructures, like state of the art landfills and wastewater treatment facilities, proved to be the most efficient way to promote such changes in the Israeli market.

A different kind of partnership is one that is currently having a large impact on our air quality policy. A partnership in promoting environmental legislation in the Israeli Parliament. The civil society along with the environmental lobby of MPs are promoting a "clean air act". The Ministry of Environmental Protection supports this initiative, but the partnership with the civil society made the difference and enabled a faster track of legislation.

Partnerships are a unique tool to assist governments in promoting policy, and should be explored to enlarge our toolbox and to assist us in promoting environmental policy and implementation.

Thank you.