

## **Human Rights Council 38<sup>th</sup> Session Item 6 – UPR Israel**

*NGO: World Jewish Congress*

*Representative delivering the statement: Ms. Lauren Rose*

Thank you, Mr. President,

We wish to thank the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review and the State of Israel for the reports summarizing the review of Israel and its related recommendations. We commend Israel for having adopted, in whole or in part, 93 of the recommendations.

As the umbrella organization representing over a hundred Jewish communities worldwide, combatting racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of hate is at the core of who we are and what we do. As a vibrant democracy, we know that Israel shares this same commitment. We encourage Israel to continue in its efforts to combat these scourges and protect the rights of all minorities, which reflect the plurality of Israeli society.

The diversity of Israel's society also manifests itself in its flourishing LGBT community. Indeed, just a few weeks ago, 250 000 people took part in Tel Aviv's annual Pride march. This celebration of diversity, now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, is unique in the Middle East. We further commend Israel for adopting most of the recommendations related to the safeguarding of LGBT rights and gender-based equality.

The freedom to practice one's religion is another tenet of a vibrant democracy. In this regard, we applaud Israel's commitment "to enable access to holy places to members of all religions", as noted in the addendum to the main report. We encourage Israel to continue building upon this commitment and ensure that the rights of all religions are protected equally.

Finally, with regards to the recommendations addressing the relationship between Israel and the PA, we wish to stress that the World Jewish Congress is deeply committed to a two-state solution, which, in our view, can only be attained by direct negotiations between the parties. However, for peace to become a reality, it is paramount for Israel to be treated fairly within international forums and for incitement to hate and terrorism by the PA and Hamas to stop.