

OSCE-2009

Address of the Representative of the State of Israel  
at the  
2009 OSCE Ministerial Council – Athens, 1-2 December

Mr. Chairman in Office  
Your Excellencies, the Ministers,  
Distinguished Representatives,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the Government of Greece for its leadership during its presidency of the OSCE and for the excellent organization of this Ministerial Council in the historical city of Athens, the cradle of democracy.

I would like also to wish the upcoming Chairman in Office, the Government of Kazakhstan, much success during its presidency of the OSCE in 2010, a year that marks 35 years since the Final Act of Helsinki was declared.

Mr. Chairman,  
Through its long history of activities and experience, the OSCE has demonstrated a decisive role in the effort to attain and maintain security and stability in regions characterized by conflicts.

Based on values of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, and peaceful resolution of disputes, the OSCE has coped with new challenges in recent years. The Organization has embarked on an important and crucial path – the Process of Corfu which will, no doubt, influence the future of security and cooperation in Europe and its partners.

Today, more than ever, it is essential to cope together with challenges such as global warming and climate change. Another issue that occupies all of us is secure energy supply and promoting the development of renewable energy. Continuous efforts to seek ways and means for increasing R&D and developing new technologies should remain a high priority on our agenda.

It is important to strengthen those who support peaceful means to resolve conflicts, but at the same time we are obliged to take concrete measures to counter terrorism and the threat of weapons of mass destruction. While, for now, nuclear weapons, long-range missiles, indiscriminate terrorism and fanatical incitement determine the global agenda, we must ultimately change this reality.

Our common goal is to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East for all peoples and all states. Israel wants to live peacefully with its neighbors and establish normal relations with the entire Arab world. The Israeli government and people are committed to

peace with the Palestinians, envisioning a solution of the conflict in which there would be two states for two peoples.

In his speech of June 14, at the Begin-Sadat Center of Bar-Ilan University, the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, set out a clear and positive vision of coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians in which two peoples live freely, side-by-side in amity and mutual respect. Each will have its own flag, its own national anthem, and its own government. Neither will threaten the security or survival of the other, and each will respect each other's identity.

To resolve the outstanding issues between us we must resume the peace negotiations without any preconditions and bring them to a successful end. With goodwill and with courageous leadership on both sides, peace can become a reality.

From the day the Netanyahu Government was sworn in, more than seven months ago, it has been calling for peace negotiations to start. The Israeli government has been willing to restrain settlement activity as part of an effort to relaunch peace talks, but we need a determined and sincere Palestinian partner: A partner that is ready to shoulder the risk and burdens.

We need to move towards a peaceful solution with a sense of urgency since the goal is not to have endless negotiations but rather to reach a peace agreement, and soon.

There has been much talk about the demarcation of the future border between Israel and the Palestinians. Undoubtedly, that is an important question for both parties that can be resolved **only** through negotiations. These negotiations must, as UN Security Council Resolution 242 clearly states, provide Israel with secure and recognized borders.

Peace requires ending incitement, ending support for terrorism, ending arms smuggling, and dismantling terrorist networks. The lessons of the war in Lebanon (in 2006) and the Operation against Hamas in Gaza (a year ago), when thousands of rockets were launched deliberately against the Israeli civilian population, cannot be ignored. Any peace agreement must ensure effective security arrangements to prevent the flow of missiles and other weapons into the West Bank, as well as guarantee Israel's inalienable right to defend itself. Any territory vacated in a future peace agreement must be demilitarized.

Developing and strengthening the Palestinian economy and Palestinian capacity-building are challenges shared by the Palestinian Authority, the international community, and Israel. A series of steps and actions, undertaken by Israel during 2008 and this year, were intended to promote and substantially improve the West Bank economy, alongside building infrastructure, security and other capacities.

Since Operation "Cast Lead", Israel has been conducting dialogue with the UN Secretary Special Envoy and various states and organizations, regarding infrastructure projects and the supply of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE serves as a model and example for regional security, cooperation, and confidence-building measures that the Mediterranean zone can certainly adopt. Our region faces common threats and challenges. At the same time, we share common opportunities in the exchange of views and cooperation in the areas of science and technology, trade and industrial research and development, environment, agriculture, transport, and in the fields of education and culture.

Israel is committed to the Mediterranean framework of the OSCE and is aware of its importance and potential for confidence-building measures. Therefore, we take part in its activity, including through the Partnership Fund, and we are looking forward to future opportunities to host again one of its meetings.

To our regret, issues such as racism, intolerance, xenophobia and antisemitism continue to concern us all and we are facing a growing manifestation of these ugly phenomena. Some of this occurs under the guise of vicious propaganda attacks against Israel itself. Israel encourages and calls for coordination, with the aim of enhancing efforts to combat jointly all expressions of hatred, especially by developing extensive educational programs on that issue.

Finally, I would like to thank the Secretary General and the Secretariat of the OSCE for their splendid work in facilitating the dialogue between OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners.

Thank you.