

ISRAEL

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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ADDRESS

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**Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
State of Israel**

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Mr. President,
Families of the Israeli hostages,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Three thousand years ago, the people of Israel journeyed from slavery in Egypt to independence in the land of Israel.

The Bible tells us that on their voyage to liberty they made a crucial stop: the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

As the General Assembly gathers this year, the Jewish people recall that historic journey by marking the festival of *Sukkot*.

And every year, at this time, our people remember that the long march to freedom requires the acceptance of humanity's basic values.

For sixty years, since the rebirth of our State in our ancient homeland, we have not lost sight of this principle.

The core values of tolerance, co-existence and peace that lie at the heart of every democracy must be protected within societies and promoted between them. This is the calling of our generation.

Mr. President,

The conflict in our region is driven by those who reject these core values - those who seek power without responsibility; those whose aim is not to realize their own rights, but to deny those rights for others.

At its heart, this is a conflict not about territory, but about values.

There is, of course, a territorial dimension to our dispute.

We know this and, as we have proven in the past, we are prepared for the territorial compromise that lasting peace entails.

But we also know— especially after withdrawing from Lebanon and Gaza - that territorial withdrawal by itself will not bring peace unless we address the core clash of values that lies beneath the conflict.

Israel may be on the front lines of this battle, but it is not our fight alone. This is a global battle.

The notion that this battle was a local one - limited to isolated regions - collapsed in this city with the twin towers on a September morning six years ago.

Today it is clear that the extremists are engaged in a bloody war against civilians and communities, against hearts and minds, in every corner of the world.

And it is clear too, that the Middle East conflict is not a cause of this global extremist agenda, but a consequence of it.

Yes, it is up to the parties in the Middle East to settle their political conflict – and Israel, for its part, desires to do so.

But for success to be genuine and lasting, you – the nations of the world – need to be partners in a shared global struggle against the extremism and terror that feed conflict, for your sake not just for ours.

It is in this spirit, that I would like to speak today about resolving our particular conflict, but also about the wider battle being waged today – the battle that affect us all.

This battle is global not just because it targets civilians everywhere, but also because the extremists have taken aim at the fundamental pillars of every modern society: democracy, tolerance and education.

These are the new battlefields of the 21st century, and it is in these arenas, more than any other, that the future of our world will be decided.

Mr. President,

I believe in democracy. I believe in its extraordinary power to produce free and peaceful societies founded on the respect for human rights.

Democracy is a profound ideal, but it is also a vulnerable one.

Today, in different parts of the world, extremists - opposed to the very ideals of democracy - are entering the democratic process not to abandon their violent agenda but to advance it.

As a spokesman for Al Qaeda recently declared “We will use your democracy to destroy your democracy”.

This should be a wake up-call for us all.

It is time to reclaim democracy, and this begins by rejecting those who abuse it.

Genuine democracy is about values before it is about voting.

No true democracy on earth allows armed militia, or groups with racist or violent agendas, to participate in elections.

But some demonstrate a troubling double standard.

There are some who insist on high standards in their own country, but forget them when they look abroad. Violent extremists who could never run for office at home, are treated as legitimate politicians when elected elsewhere.

As a result, we empower those who use democratic means to advance anti-democratic ends. And we strengthen the forces of those who not only undermine their societies but threaten our own.

Today, from this podium, I call on the international community to adopt at the global level what democracies apply at the national one - a universal set of standards for participation in genuine democratic elections.

We need a universal democratic code that requires that all those seeking the legitimacy of the democratic process, earn it, by respecting such principles as State monopoly over the lawful use of force, the rejection of racism and violence, and the protection of the rights of others.

The goal of such a universal code is not to dictate our values or to stifle legitimate voices with which we may disagree

Its goal is to protect core democratic values from those determined to use the democratic system against itself; and to make clear that participation in the democratic process is not just a right - it is also a responsibility.

Mr. President,

I know that the temptation to engage with extremists can be strong. It may seem to promise stability and quiet. We may hope that by feeding the beast we can gradually tame it.

As free societies, we pride ourselves - rightly - on our respect for difference and diversity.

But we do a disservice to diversity when, in its name, we tolerate the intolerant.

Bitter experience has shown that buying off extremists is a short-term fix -- for which we will pay dearly in the long run.

Instead, groups such as Hamas and Hizbollah must be presented with a clear choice - between the path of violence and the path of legitimacy. They cannot have both.

And it is this same stark choice that must be presented to the radical regime in Iran.

No responsible state disagrees that Iran is the most prominent sponsor of terrorism. It is a major source of instability and conflict in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and across the entire Middle East and it is the enemy of Arab-Israeli co-existence.

None disagrees that Iran denies the Holocaust and speaks openly of its desire to wipe a member state - mine - off the map.

And none disagrees that, in violation of Security Council resolutions, it is actively pursuing the means to achieve this end.

But there are still those who, in the name of consensus and engagement, continue to obstruct the urgent steps which are needed to bring Iran's sinister ambitions to a halt.

Too many see the danger but walk idly by – hoping that someone else will take care of it.

What is the value, we have to ask, of an organization which is unable to take effective action in the face of a direct assault on the very principles it was founded to protect?

It is time for the United Nations, and the States of the world, to live up to their promise of never again.

To say enough is enough, to act now and to defend their basic values.

It is also time, Mr. President, to see this same kind of moral conviction in the Human Rights Council - so that it can become a shield for the victims of human rights, not a weapon for its abusers.

Israel has never tried to avoid genuine discussion of its human rights record. But so long as the Council maintains its wildly disproportionate focus on Israel, it weakens the UN's moral voice, and the price of this blindness is paid by the victims of human rights atrocities in Darfur and Myanmar and throughout the world.

Mr. President,

There is no more accurate forecast for the future of a society than the lessons it teaches its children.

Unfortunately, in our region, we see children's television programs in which a Mickey Mouse puppet teaches the glory of being a suicide bomber and a seven year old girl sings of her dreams of blood and battle.

Religion, rather than being a source of hope and spiritual healing is abused as a call to arms, as God is dragged once again onto the field of battle.

It is time to reclaim religion from those who have made it a weapon rather than a shelter. It is time to reclaim education from those who use it as a tool of hate, rather than of opportunity.

As always, the most powerful form of education – and the hardest – is to teach by example.

We cannot expect our younger generation to value what we are not prepared ourselves to protect and pay a price for. And there is a price to pay.

From the leader who has to withstand public pressures. From the businessman who has to forgo economic opportunity. From the teacher and spiritual guide who must find the inner strength to teach truth and tolerance in a climate of extremism and hostility.

At all levels of society, there is a price to be paid. But if we do not pay it today, we, and those who follow us, will face a far greater bill tomorrow.

Mr. President,

These thoughts are in my mind as we seek today to advance the cause of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not about deciding who was right or wrong in the past – it is about sharing a common vision and a common responsibility for the future.

In the last months, Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas have been engaged in a sincere and genuine effort to reach the widest possible common ground on political understandings.

There is no substitute for the bilateral process. Failure is not an option – but it is for the parties themselves to define success.

The foundation for true peace lies in the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The world shares this vision, but it is also important that it clearly embraces the two core principles that emerge from it.

The first – two States, two homelands - just as Israel is homeland to the Jewish people, so Palestine will be established as the homeland and the national answer for the Palestinian people, including the refugees.

The second – living side by side in peace and security - just as a viable and prosperous Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza is an Israeli interest, so a secure Israel must be a Palestinian interest. The world cannot afford another terror State.

Guided by these principles, the parties can define a common border and turn the two State vision from a dream into a reality.

To succeed, we must set our sights on a brighter future, while responding to the challenges of the present and learning the lessons of the past.

As we make progress on concrete political understandings, it is just as important to change reality on the ground – to show Palestinians and Israelis that the promise of peace exists in practice, not just on paper.

In recent months, Israel has taken tangible measures to create a better environment, and we are ready to do more.

We know that Palestinian life is full of day to day hardship. We know also - only too well - of the burden of terror Israelis bear, and of our primary obligation to their security. Together, we can change this reality – we do not need to submit to it.

We are not naïve. We can see the difficulties ahead and the enemies of peace that stand in our way. But practical progress is possible in those areas where there is an

effective Palestinian government that accepts the Quartet principles and implements, alongside Israel, existing Road Map obligations.

As the parties take the risks for peace, we look to the international community and the Arab and Muslim world, to offer support, not to stipulate conditions.

This support comes in many forms.

It comes through economic and political assistance to the new Palestinian government, committed to co-existence and seeking to build the foundations of a peaceful and prosperous State.

It comes through clear endorsement of any political understandings reached between the parties.

It comes through enhancing and deepening regional ties and cooperation between the Arab world and Israel, while in parallel we make advancement towards Israeli-Palestinian peace.

And, finally, it comes by confronting those determined to prevent us from succeeding.

We must stand up to those who have no respect for human life or human liberty - those who hold the captive soldiers Gilad Schalit, Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev - whose families are with us here today, and whose pain remains always in our hearts.

We must stand up to those who, after we withdrew from Gaza to give a chance for peace, chose not to build but to destroy, and choose - on a daily basis - to target Israeli homes and kindergartens with their missiles.

And we must stand up to those who see democracy as a tool to advance hate, who see tolerance as a one-way street, and who see education as a means to poison the minds of the next generation.

Ladies and Gentleman, I believe that, despite all the obstacles, there is a new moment of opportunity, and an alliance of interest that favors peace.

Time is of the essence. We owe it to ourselves and to our children to find both the courage and the wisdom to make the right choices in the right way.

Mr. President,

On this festival of *Sukkot*, Jews commemorate the journey from slavery to freedom by leaving their homes to live in fragile huts, like the shelters our ancestors lived in on their way to the Promised Land.

For three thousand years these temporary huts - open to the elements - have been a reminder that stability and security are ensured not only by the structures that we build but also by the values that we share.

Perhaps it is for this reason that the *Sukkah*, this fragile shelter, has become the Jewish symbol of peace.

As we turn to Jerusalem and say in our prayers every day:

וּפְרוֹשׁ עֲלֵינוּ סוּכַת שְׁלוֹמְךָ...

Spread over us the tabernacle of your peace...

May it be in our days, and for all nations... Amen.