

H.E. Mr. Shimon Peres
President of the State of Israel

History was written in blood. Most wars were waged over territory.

Today, science, creativity and knowledge replaced land as the source of wealth. Land can be conquered. Not science. Science is global, borderless. Armies can't conquer it.

Yet, still, Lawless terrorists spread violence caused by ideological differences, social gaps and sheer fanaticism. The new millennium must liberate the world, from bloodshed, from discrimination, from hunger, from ignorance, from maladies.

Modern science is capable to provide new answers. In the coming ten years there will be an explosion of knowledge. Computation power increased a million folds in the last 25 years. Scientists are venturing into the brain.

Mr. President,

I speak on behalf of a small people, and a tiny land. We knew rebirth despite the murder of one third of our people. The *Shoah*. We were alone. Our land was attacked 7 times in 62 years. Again. We were alone.

Never giving up on hope, we developed science. We found that the future is in our hands. We learned that people can enrich land, no less than land can nourish the people.

Israel is the product of pioneering human spirit – not of financial capital.

In spite of wars, we made peace with Egypt and Jordan. The territorial dispute with Lebanon has ended and acknowledged so by the UN.

We left Gaza on our own initiative. Completely. We are now negotiating with the Palestinians in order to realize the two-state-solution:

A Jewish state, Israel. An Arab State- Palestine. There is no other peaceful alternative. And, I believe that we shall succeed. We are ready to enter in direct negotiations with Syria immediately.

Mr. President

We are committed to the Millennium development goals. We share the burden of saving the world from war and hunger. Without peace, poverty will remain. Without food – peace will not prevail.

Statesmen have to mobilize political power to achieve peace. Scientists can enable the land produce more food. We developed an agriculture based on science.

Our farmers produce 8-folds per acre compared with the nation's early days. The need for water was cut in half. We employed desalination, recycling, drip and electronic irrigation and bio-engineering to create new seeds and richer crops.

Five decades ago, an Israeli farmer produced food for 15 persons. Today, he produces for 120.

The farmer's contribution to the GDP equals that of a high-tech engineer. To cultivate land, you have to cultivate education and improve health.

So we introduced free compulsory education for all, from age 5 to 18. It brought an end to illiteracy and provided us with the highest rate of scientists per square mile in the world. The National health-care system provides world-class treatment for every citizen.

We are also one of the only countries in the world that entered the 21st century with more trees than it had when it entered the 20th century.

Mr. President,

I am confident that our path is available to everyone. Our experience is replicable. We are ready to share our experience as we did already with many countries — both through UN agencies and bilaterally.

Our call includes also nations that don't have diplomatic ties with us.

Mr. President,

The other day, the formal leader of Iran declared there's no future for Israel in the Middle East. I believe that the Middle East has room for every person, every nation, every religion.

We believe that every person was created in the image of the lord – and there's just one Lord who calls not to hate, not to threaten, not to seek superiority, and not to kill. There is enough room for friendship in the Middle East.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my youth I was a member of a Kibbutz, cultivating poor land. I owned, like all members, two shirts and two pairs of pants. There was a third pair of pants: made of flannel reserved for grooms only.

I was lucky to wear them for two full days during my wedding. The main dish in the kibbutz was eggplants. Meat was available once a week, but not every week. There was no private money and little collective money.

We were poor and happy. The sort of happiness felt when a person as is turning desert into garden. Today the kibbutz has a thriving agriculture and a profitable guest house. Food is plentiful. It is in the kibbutz, in scarcity, where I learned to respect pioneers. And developed an affinity to creative minds and laborious hands. Actually, my early dream was to see the world as a great kibbutz. Free, peaceful, productive.

Mr. President,

I call upon this gathering to address the two burning challenges: first, to harness science and technology to increase food production. And second, to stand together against terror. A hungry world will never be peaceful.

A terrorized world will never be governable. We should unite around a common hope. The cradle of our children shall be the cradle of our vision.