



Address of Israel's Ambassador to the OSCE

Mr. Aviv Shir-On

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Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates.

At the outset we wish to thank government of Ireland for its generosity in hosting this year's OSCE Ministerial, and to Tánaiste the Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs and his abled team in Dublin and in Vienna for chairing the OSCE this year.

We also extend our best wishes to the government of Ukraine for a successful term as Chair-in-Office in 2013, and thank them for chairing the Contact Group of the Mediterranean Partner States.

Israel's continued commitment to the principles and goals of the OSCE – as reflected in the Helsinki Final Act - is unwavering. Our commitment was expressed by the President of Israel, Mr. Peres, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lieberman, during the official visit in June 2012 of Secretary General Lamberto Zannier to Israel as a guest speaker at the Israeli Presidential Conference "Facing Tomorrow".

As a result of this visit, Israel has initiated a dialogue with the OSCE on anti-terrorism, transnational threats and cyber security, underscoring the importance of a comprehensive security concept.

This year we have witnessed what the power of the people can do in their struggle for democracy and freedoms, and the readiness of the OSCE to extend its hand across the three dimensions to help bring the peoples' aspirations to fruition – whether in real space with an eye towards stability,

security and economic prosperity, in the written and electronic press, or throughout cyberspace.

We have also welcomed Mongolia on becoming the 57th Member State of the OSCE.

2012 has been a year of many changes, and with these changes we now face many new challenges.

These challenges include the growing rise of anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, the religious persecution of Christian minorities, racism and hate crimes across the OSCE region.

We commend the work of ODIHR in its efforts to promote the teachings and lessons of the Holocaust, as well as the ever vigilant Personal Representatives of the Chairperson in Office for their tireless efforts in encouraging tolerance and acceptance.

This year's successful Mediterranean Conference in Rome highlighted the importance of enhancing the participation of women in political and public life, and we were happy to have had an Israeli representative serve on the panel addressing this issue.

Under the leadership of the Ukrainian Chair of the Contact Group for Mediterranean Partners, we saw a real commitment towards deepening the engagement with the Partners, as well as a commitment to foster regional cooperation.

At the Astana Summit, the Participating States recognized that the security of the OSCE area is "inextricably linked" to that of its neighboring regions. Towards that end, the "Valencia Initiative" held its first successful expert meeting in Amman, Jordan, in which three Israeli experts joined with their Jordanian and Egyptian colleagues in taking the first steps towards the realization of a more environmentally secure Middle East.

An environmentally threat-free Middle East is crucial to regional security. Israel is proud to have initiated a Resolution on "Water Management, Desertification and Technologies" during the summer OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Monaco.

We are confident that under the Swiss Chair new channels of engagement will be opened between the OSCE and Partners alike, and offer our support in such areas as energy security.

Stability, security, defending democracy and economic prosperity in the Middle East are the main priorities of the Mediterranean Partners.

And yet, it was only a few weeks ago that the Jewish State of Israel was called upon once again to defend its cities, towns and villages following months of constant Hamas rocket and missile attacks emanating from Gaza.

These very rockets and missiles found their way to Hamas-controlled Gaza from Iran, a country which continues to finance, train, and equip terror organizations like Hamas. It is the same Iran that is closing in on the bomb, unstoppable, threatening not only Israel, but also peace and stability in the OSCE region.

We will not allow a base for Iranian terrorism to be established in Judea and Samaria, in addition to those that have already been established in Gaza and Lebanon by Hizballah. After the onslaught of hundreds of rockets purposely fired from Gaza upon an innocent Israeli population, Israel invoked its right of self-defense and launched Operation Pillar of Defense.

Our aim was to hit Hamas' terrorist infrastructures often hidden behind and under homes, and near mosques, schools and hospitals.

As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently stated: ... "Israel is prepared to live in peace with a Palestinian state, but for peace to endure, Israel's security must be protected, the Palestinians must recognize the Jewish State and they must be prepared to end the conflict with Israel once and for all."

The recent UN Resolution upgrading the status of the Palestinians turns away from the basic idea that the realization of legitimate Palestinian interests can only be achieved by coming to terms with legitimate Israeli interests. The rejection of this fundamental principle and the embrace of unilateralism by the Palestinians now compel Israel to take steps of its own outside the negotiating framework.

The effects of this UN Resolution are limited, and should not be held as a precedent for the Palestinian Authority to join other international organizations, including the OSCE.

65 years ago the Palestinians refused to negotiate and went to war. Now, they are still refusing to negotiate and will fail again. The establishment of a Palestinian state, which we support in principle, can only be achieved through a negotiated agreement with Israel.

But before a full-fledged state is established, any attempt to include the Palestinians as a Partner in the Mediterranean Group of the OSCE remains premature.

We are still waiting for a Palestinian leader with the same vision for peace pursued by the late President Sadat of Egypt, and the late King Hussein of Jordan, who, with great courage, transformed their vision into a reality.

Peace is a central value of Israeli society. We greet one another with the word "Shalom", meaning peace, and as the Torah commands us:

בקש שלום ורדפהו

"Seek peace and pursue it."

But, in order to actually achieve peace, our neighbors must do the same.

Thank you.