

Address of Ambassador Pinchas Avivi
Deputy Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of
Israel
16th OSCE Ministerial Council – Helsinki, 5 December 2008

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

Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the Government of Finland for its leadership during its presidency of the OSCE and for the excellent organization of this Ministerial Council.

I would like also to wish the upcoming Chairman in Office, the Government of Greece, much success during its presidency of the OSCE in 2009.

Mr. Chairman,
Through its long history of activities and experience, the OSCE has demonstrated a decisive role in the search for the attainment of 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. 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 have to ultimately change that agenda. This is a global fight for our principles and our future.

The President of the State of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres, once said, "We cannot change the past. However, we can shape the future."

Our common goal is comprehensive peace in the Middle East for all peoples and all states. Peace requires ending incitement, ending support for terrorism, ending arms smuggling, and dismantling terrorist networks.

Comprehensive regional peace requires the completion of the bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and both sides sharing the painful cost.

We are ready for this, as we have proved many times in the past when we signed peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, began the Oslo Process, evacuated southern Lebanon, and withdrew from the Gaza Strip.

These days we are continuing negotiations with the Palestinians and exploring the possibility of reaching genuine peace with Syria.

The core principles and long-term interests of Israel and its Palestinian counterparts will show the way – that is, a peace agreement based on two nation states living side-by-side in peace and security, and continuing the struggle against extremism and terrorism. Both parties believe in the need to follow through with the Annapolis process that they embarked on exactly one year ago.

The parties understand better than anyone the urgency of reaching an agreement, but they also know better than anyone what is possible and what timing is best. More than ten teams are working on all the issues required to achieve a comprehensive solution to the conflict. The negotiations are intense and serious. We expect the international community to accompany this process, but at the same time to respect the bilateral nature of the talks between the parties. The international community and the states in the region can create a supportive atmosphere of coexistence and regional cooperation.

Israel wants to live a life of peace and partnership, and to establish normal relations with the entire Arab world.

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. The Mediterranean 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 and transport, as well as in the fields of education and culture.

We meet here, the OSCE and Mediterranean partners, to discuss mutual security and cooperation venues.

Israel is very committed to the Mediterranean framework of the OSCE and is aware of its importance and potential for attaining confidence-building measures. Therefore we welcome enthusiastically the opportunity to take part in its activity and to contribute also by hosting meetings and participants in courses in Israel. Last year, Israel hosted the annual meeting of the Mediterranean partners and

the OSCE members, and we are looking forward to future opportunities to host such meetings again. Israel attaches great importance to open dialogue and, during the last annual meeting in Amman, was able to share with the participants its experience in the water sector.

To our sorrow, phenomena such as racism, intolerance, xenophobia and anti-Semitism continue to concern us all and we are facing a growing manifestation of this. 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.