

NATO-Israel Conference

המרכז הבין-תחומי בהרצליה, 22 באוקטובר, 2007

Address by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni

**His Excellency Ambassador Claudio Bisogniero (ביזוניירו),
Deputy Secretary General of NATO,
Prof. Uriel Reichman, President IDC Herzliya,
Professor Uzi Arad, Chairman of the Atlantic Forum of Israel,
Distinguished Guests and Participants,**

Opening Words

I would like to welcome to Israel Ambassador Bisogniero (ביזוניירו), Deputy Secretary General of NATO, as a close ally.

Partnership of Israel and NATO

In sharing the same values of democracy and freedom, facing the same threats and in the will to defend our common way of life,
NATO and Israel are natural partners and strategic allies.

The Western civilization and the Atlantic Community, which NATO defends, are Israel's natural habitat. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Israel was the first Mediterranean country to conclude an Individual Cooperation Program with NATO.

NATO was established in the early days of the Cold War to defend democracy and to secure the freedom of the western world.

Israel was established as a democracy, in a sea of non democratic entities. In this context, Israel, till today, represents these values in the entire Middle East region.

Extremism

As Israel and NATO are partners in upholding the values of democracy, so also we are partners in meeting the threat of extremism.

The battle of our time is the battle between the moderates and the extremists. Extremists do not fight for their own rights, but fight in order to deprive the rights of others.

Extremism is not a local problem – it transcends borders and nations. This is not an Israeli problem, or a European issue, it is a global threat, which must be dealt with in a Global manner – with unity and determination.

Extremism manifests itself in many ways. The threat can evolve from state actors or other forms.

As a state actor - we witness how a state, a member of the United Nations, **like Iran**, seeks weapons of mass destruction, supports terrorism world wide, and at the same time calls for the destruction of a fellow member of the United Nations.

We also face the threat of **global terrorism** – deriving from states or organizations.

They use various means and methods to promote their agenda. Among them the **proliferation of weapons of mass destruction**, the spread of **incitement** and **hatred literature**, and also the **manipulation of the democratic system** for their own means. Both in Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority we have seen how **terrorist organizations have penetrated into the political democratic processes**, acquiring false legitimacy through the back

door. **We must block this penetration of democratic systems.** In my speech at the UN General Assembly I proposed the adoption of a universal democratic code, or a universal set of standards, which requires that all those seeking legitimacy earn it by respecting principles as state monopoly, the rejection of racism and violence and the protection of human rights.

In this context, it is now evidently true that the regional conflicts in the Middle East are not a cause of the extremism, but a result of this phenomena.

The Regional Conflict

Recognition of the fact that extremism is at the root of our regional conflict has an impact on the understanding of the conflict and the Palestinian Israeli relations.

Israel and the pragmatic Arab world, including the moderate Palestinians, share the same battle. It is now clear that the true conflict in the region is not between Israel and the Palestinians, or between Jews and Arabs, but between moderates and extremists.

Therefore, our policy must be a **dual policy**, one which combats the extremists and isolates them on the one hand, while at the same time strengthens the moderates and builds with them bridges of understanding and cooperation.

In the Israeli Palestinian context, the split between extremists and moderates has now also been expressed by an additional dimension – the **territorial dimension**. With the violent takeover of the Gaza Strip by the Hamas, we see a clear territorial distinction – the Hamas in Gaza and the Fatah in the West Bank. Therefore, our policy, as well, must make this distinction.

The process with the Moderates

With the pragmatic leaders in the Palestinian Authority, we share a common vision and common objectives. We share the vision of two states, two homelands, giving an answer to the national aspirations of both sides, living side by side in peace and security. It is no longer perceived as a zero sum game.

It would, however, be naïve to assume that there are no differences of interests between the two sides. Therefore we must pursue a process and dialogue in order to bridge the differences.

At the basis of such a process we must understand that the coordination of expectations is most important for success.

In the process, we want to **bridge two gaps**.

The first gap relates to the open issues between the two sides. We want to reach understandings on these open issues, based on the **willingness of both sides to compromise**. This includes also an understanding that both sides must also give up on some of their historical dreams.

The second gap is the gap between the understandings reached and the ability to implement them. There is no disputing the fact that there is a gap between the will of the pragmatic Palestinian leaders and their capability to execute.

Even if we do, hopefully, resolve the principle issues relating to the Palestinian state, it is clear that we cannot just separate and throw the key to the other side and hope for the best.

The Gaza experience is a living example of what the world cannot afford. Israel fully withdrew from the Gaza Strip, thus terminating its so called occupation of the Strip, and allowing the Palestinians to establish independent governance. In return, we received increased terror, daily Kassam rocket attacks against cities in Israel and the establishment of a Hamas stronghold on our southern border.

We must ensure that there is an efficient and effective government which takes control over the area and prevents attacks against Israel.

This gap can be bridged by the **Roap Map formula**, according to which the first stage in the implementation of any agreement is the fight against terror and the dismantling of terror organizations.

Israel is prepared to engage in the process and the dialogue already now, with the understanding that the execution of any agreement depends on the implementation as stated in the Road Map.

Insisting on the implementation of the Road Map is not an obstacle, but the opposite, it enables us to advance towards the

realization of two states living in peace and security. The world cannot afford to allow the development of another terror state.

Just as a Palestinian State is an Israeli interest, so Israeli security must be a Palestinian interest.

NATO was a pioneer in setting security as a central aspect in regional stability.

Outer Belts – Additional support to the process

The bilateral track is the way to resolve the conflict. But, in order for this process to succeed, it will also require the support of two outer belts – the moderate Arab and Moslem states, along with the international community.

The moderate Arab states must give their support to the process, in a way that will strengthen the moderates in the Palestinian Authority. One of the lessons of the past is the significance of the lack of support rendered by the Arab world to the process, at critical junctions. We are now at such a junction, and the pragmatic leaders need this support. The Arab and Moslem world must adopt any decision that the Palestinians accept, and not dictate the

results. They must participate in any meeting that is convened, and not present conditions for their participation. Instead of waiting till the end of the conflict in order to normalize relations with Israel, they can take steps now, as Israel takes steps towards the Palestinians.

The outer belt which is equally important is the **support of the international community**. The role of the international community is to give its support to the bilateral track, and encourage the moderate Palestinians to make the necessary compromises. **They can also encourage the Arab world to normalize their relations with Israel**, which will directly and indirectly support the process.

The international community must also support the process in one of the most crucial elements – the **Institution Building**. Part and parcel of a viable Palestinian state is the building of efficient and responsible government institutions, ensuring law and order, securing and maintaining monopoly over the use of force, and general capacity building.

Global cooperation and NATO-Israel relations

As I mentioned, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is in-separable from the global issue of extremism and the challenges of the day.

In order to meet the challenges I have mentioned, we call for **increased global cooperation**. Cooperation must go beyond the local level. There is no-one better to lead the way than NATO. NATO must, accordingly, also re-align its partnerships according to the functional needs, and not regional considerations.

Israel seeks a formal partnership relationship with NATO. Israel's efforts to enhance relations with NATO are part of its broader foreign policy to bolster Israel's multilateral diplomacy.

Israel is committed to the NATO Mediterranean dialogue, and is fully aware of its great potential, as a framework for confidence building measures between NATO, members of the dialogue and the moderate Arab world.

Facing the threats and challenges I mentioned earlier, now more than ever before, it is time to upgrade the bilateral relations

between Israel and NATO, broaden the scope of cooperation and promote joint activity.

While NATO re-aligns itself, according to functional needs and global requirements, to meet the challenges of our generation, it will find in Israel a willing and reliable partner.

Thank You.