

Israel's

DISENGAGEMENT

Plan

Renewing the Peace Process



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DISENGAGEMENT
Renewing the Peace Process *Plan*

April 2005

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Introduction

Hope for the prospects of peace has revived in recent months. The death of Yasser Arafat and the election of his successor, Mahmoud Abbas, have fostered the expectation of a new era in relations between Israelis and Palestinians. Within this context, Israel's Disengagement Plan, introduced in December 2003, should be seen as an important step forward.

Ever since the 1967 Six Day War brought Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip under Israel's administration, their status has been in contention. Israel was forced to wage that war in self-defense, and the disputed territories were held not as the object of conquest, but to be part of eventual negotiations for lasting peace.

Although Israel has historic ties, security needs and other vital interests that are directly connected to these disputed territories, it was never Israel's intention to rule over a large Palestinian population. Israel is ready as always to address the vital interests of the Palestinians in these areas. The goal is to reach a just settlement that would allow both peoples to live in genuine peace and security.

Israel demonstrated its willingness to trade land for peace in its 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, when it gave back all of the Sinai Peninsula. This decision entailed painful sacrifices, including the dismantlement of the town of Yamit and the uprooting of all the Sinai settlements.

Today Israel is poised to disengage from the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the northern West Bank, an initiative that will be the first practical test of the possibility for peaceful coexistence with the Palestinian Authority under the new leadership of Mahmoud Abbas. This bold move to end the stalemate in the peace process follows more than four years of terrorist bloodshed that have brought untold suffering to both Israelis and Palestinians.

Preparations for implementing the government's Disengagement Plan, which was endorsed by the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) in October 2004, received a welcome boost at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in February 2005. At the summit, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and PA Chairman Abbas both declared an end to the violence and formally renewed the dialogue for peace.

The Disengagement Plan does not replace negotiations, but could make an important contribution to the renewal of peace talks as envisaged by the Roadmap sponsored by the

United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations – provided, of course, that the PA eliminates the infrastructure of terrorism. It is Israel’s view that the direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians on the final status will result in the establishment of full peaceful relations between Israel and a Palestinian state.

This plan of course entails risk, but it is an opportunity Israel feels is well worth taking. As Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom stated in an address before the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard on March 7, 2005:

“We recognize that the effort to resolve our conflict with the Palestinians can have a positive impact on a broad range of other issues of international concern, and we are committed to this task. We are prepared to take risks for peace. ”

Evolution of the Plan

The Disengagement Plan was approved by Israel's cabinet on June 6, 2004 and by the Knesset on October 25, 2004, but it was introduced by Prime Minister Sharon on December 18, 2003, in a speech before the Fourth Herzliya Conference. He told the conference, which has become an annual "summit meeting" of the most influential Israeli and international leaders:

“Like all Israeli citizens, I yearn for peace. I attach supreme importance to taking all steps which will enable progress toward resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians. However, in light of the other challenges we are faced with, if the Palestinians do not make a similar effort toward a solution of the conflict, I do not intend to wait for them indefinitely. ”

Prime Minister Sharon presented the plan by recalling the Roadmap, whose acceptance he had announced at the previous year's Herzliya Conference:



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Prime Minister Sharon presents the Disengagement Plan to the Knesset



Prime Minister Sharon
at the Herzliya Conference

“The Roadmap is the only political plan accepted by Israel, the Palestinians, the Americans and a majority of the international community. We are willing to proceed toward its implementation: two states – Israel and a Palestinian state – living side by side in tranquility, security, and peace. ”

He noted that an essential condition of the Roadmap is its requirement that terrorism must stop and the terrorist organizations be dismantled.

“The concept behind this plan is that only security will lead to peace – and in that sequence. Without the achievement of full security – within the framework of which terrorist organizations will be dismantled – it will not be possible to achieve genuine peace, a peace for generations. ”

The Prime Minister called on the Palestinians to meet the challenge of peaceful coexistence:

“We would like you to govern yourselves in your own country: a democratic Palestinian state with territorial contiguity in Judea and Samaria and economic viability, which would conduct normal relations of tranquility, security, and peace with Israel... We hope that the Palestinian Authority will carry out its part. However, if in a few months the Palestinians still continue to disregard their part in implementing the Roadmap, then Israel will initiate the unilateral security step of disengagement from the Palestinians. ”

Disengagement has two main purposes, Sharon said: enhancing Israel’s security by reducing terrorism and boosting Israel’s economy by improving the quality of life.

“We are interested in conducting direct negotiations, but do not intend to hold Israeli society hostage in the hands of the Palestinians. I have already said: We will not wait for them indefinitely. ”

As Sharon noted,

“The Disengagement Plan does not prevent the implementation of the Roadmap. Rather, it is a step Israel will take in the absence of any other option, in order to improve its security. The Disengagement Plan will be realized only in the event that the Palestinians continue to drag their feet and postpone implementation of the Roadmap. ”

Today there is renewed optimism that the Disengagement Plan will succeed to advance peace efforts where previous attempts have failed. The demise of Arafat and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as PA Chairman have opened the possibility of coordinating key aspects of the plan with the Palestinian side. The renewed dialogue and coordination between Israel and the PA, together with Palestinian steps to end terrorism and dismantle its infrastructure, will hopefully enable an orderly transition of security responsibility and ensure that the Disengagement Plan's implementation does indeed improve conditions on the ground, serving as a platform for renewed negotiations between the sides.

Key Provisions of the Disengagement Plan

The following provisions were approved by the Israeli cabinet on June 6, 2004. Some of the details have been modified in accordance with contacts between Israel and relevant parties, including Egypt, the World Bank, and others.

- The Jewish towns and villages to be evacuated are to be classified into four groups:
 - Group A Morag, Netzarim, and Kfar Darom in the Gaza Strip
 - Group B the villages of Ganim, Kadim, Sa-Nur, and Homesh in northern Samaria
 - Group C the towns and villages of Gush Katif in the Gaza Strip
 - Group D the villages of the northern Gaza Strip (Elei Sinai, Dugit, and Nissanit)
- Israel will evacuate the Gaza Strip and will redeploy outside the Strip. This evacuation will not include military deployment in the border area between the Gaza Strip and Egypt ("the Philadelphi Route"), an area known for its arms-smuggling tunnels.
- Israel will evacuate the above-mentioned settlements in northern Samaria (West Bank) and all military installations in this area. This move will enable territorial contiguity for Palestinians in the area.
- Israel will assist, together with the international community, in improving the transportation infrastructure in the West Bank in order to facilitate the contiguity of Palestinian transportation and facilitate normal Palestinian economic activity in the West Bank.
- Israel will continue building the anti-terrorist security fence. The route will take into account humanitarian considerations, in accordance with rulings by Israel's Supreme Court.



Northern Samaria



Gaza Strip

- Security measures following disengagement:

The Gaza Strip

- Israel will guard the perimeter of the Gaza Strip, continue to control Gaza air space, and continue to patrol the sea off the Gaza coast.
- The Gaza Strip shall be demilitarized and devoid of weaponry which is not in accordance with the Israeli-Palestinian agreements.
- Israel reserves its fundamental right of self-defense, both preventive and reactive.

The West Bank

- After the evacuation of the northern Samaria area, no permanent Israeli military presence will remain in the area.
- Israel reserves its fundamental right of self-defense, both preventive and reactive.
- In other areas of the West Bank, ongoing security activity will continue as circumstances require.
- Israel will work to reduce the number of checkpoints throughout the West Bank.

- Security Assistance to the Palestinians

Israel agrees to coordinate assistance and training for the Palestinian security forces by American, British, Egyptian, Jordanian, or other experts in an effort to combat terrorism and maintain public order.

- Border Area Between the Gaza Strip and Egypt

Israel will continue to maintain its essential military presence to prevent arms smuggling along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt (Philadelphi Route), until the security situation and cooperation with Egypt permit an alternative security arrangement.

- Ports

Israel will consider the establishment of a seaport and airport in the Gaza Strip, in accordance with arrangements to be agreed upon.

- Real Estate Assets

Israel will aspire to transfer industrial, commercial, and agricultural facilities to an international party that will put them to use for the benefit of the Palestinian population. A final decision will be taken regarding the disposition of Israeli residences.

In particular, the Erez industrial zone will be transferred to the responsibility of an agreed upon Palestinian or international party.

Israel will explore, together with Egypt, the possibility of establishing a joint industrial zone on the border of the Gaza Strip, Egypt, and Israel.

- **Civil Infrastructure and Arrangements**

The infrastructure for water, electricity, sewage, and telecommunications will remain in place. Israel will continue to sell electricity, water, gas, and fuel to the Palestinians.

- **Economic Arrangements**

The economic arrangements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority shall remain in force. These include, inter alia: the passage of goods among the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Israel, and abroad; the monetary regime; tax and customs arrangements; postal and telecommunications arrangements; the entry of workers into Israel.

In line with Israel's interest in encouraging greater Palestinian economic independence, it expects to eventually end the employment of Palestinian workers in Israel. Israel supports the international development of sources of employment in the Gaza Strip and in Palestinian areas of the West Bank.

- **Compensation for Settlers**

An Inter-ministerial Committee on Relocation, Compensation, and Alternative Settlement will prepare legislation regarding relocation and compensation for settlers.

Conclusion

The goal of the plan is to break the current deadlock by removing the too-often lethal friction between Israelis and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank, thereby improving the situation. If and when the Palestinian side demonstrates its willingness to cease terrorism and institute reforms as required by the Roadmap, the dialogue for peace can resume.

The Sharm e-Sheikh Summit

(February 8, 2005)

Israel's Disengagement Plan was endorsed by Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority at a summit meeting with Israel at Sharm e-Sheikh on February 8, 2005. At the summit, Prime Minister Sharon and PA Chairman Abbas declared a cease-fire, formally ending more than four years of violence and terrorism.

Beyond the cease-fire, Sharon and Abbas agreed on a process of transferring security responsibility for Palestinian areas even before the implementation of the Disengagement Plan. Israel would also initiate a series of other confidence-building measures, including the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and agreement to the construction of a sea port in Gaza. Israel's wish, said Sharon, is "to conduct a genuine and honest dialogue in order to transform these first steps into a sound basis for the foundation of our relations."

The Prime Minister told the summit's host, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's King Abdullah II, and Abbas of his determination to carry out the Disengagement Plan:



Prime Minister Sharon
and Chairman Abbas at
Sharm e-Sheikh

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“The Disengagement Plan was initiated by a unilateral decision. Now, if new change does emerge on the Palestinian side, the disengagement can bring hope and become the new starting point for a coordinated, successful process. ”

“The Disengagement Plan can pave the way to implementation of the Roadmap, to which we are committed and which we want to implement. We are prepared to actively fulfill all our obligations, and expect the other side to carry out all its obligations. Only actions and not words – this is the only way to attain the vision of two states living side-by-side in peace and tranquility... ”

Addressing the Palestinian people, Sharon said:

“You, too, must prove that you have the strength and the courage to compromise, abandon unrealistic dreams, subdue the forces which oppose peace, and live in peace and mutual respect side-by-side with us... ”

And to the citizens of Israel, Sharon said:

“We have passed difficult years, faced the most painful experiences and overcame them. The future lies before us. We are required to take difficult and controversial steps, but we must not miss the opportunity to try to achieve what we have wished for, for so many years: security, tranquility, and peace. ”

Prime Minister Sharon
together with
President Mubarak,
King Abdullah and
Chairman Abbas



The Costs of Disengagement

On February 16, 2005, the Knesset passed the final version of the Disengagement Plan Implementation Law, providing NIS 3.8 billion (\$884 million) to pay for the relocation of some 9,000 Jewish residents of the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank and to compensate them for the loss of their homes and livelihoods. On February 20, the cabinet voted to implement the plan.

The democratic process of passing the Disengagement Law was a stormy one, marked by weeks of vocal opposition and public demonstrations by the settler lobby and their supporters against the very idea of disengagement. These protests reflected the understandable reluctance of people to leave their homes – many of which they moved into as young pioneers and are about to leave as grandparents. There were also counterdemonstrations by supporters of the government's decision, which opinion polls repeatedly had shown reflected a national consensus of approximately 70 percent in favor of disengagement.

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FOR

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AGAINST



GPO / AMOS BEN GERSHON

What is being given up: homes at one of the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip

Some of the settlers have already accepted the fact that, just as they had once answered the government's call to build their homes in the territories, they are now being called upon to yield these territories to advance the cause of peace. Many of these settlers plan to channel their pioneering spirit into building new homes in the Negev and Galilee. Hopefully, the remainder will come to realize that despite the trauma they are going through – one which the Government of Israel is determined to alleviate as much as possible – their sacrifice will benefit the country as a whole and will ultimately enhance the chances for peace and security

Reason to Hope

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has dragged both peoples through more than a century of violence and terrorism. It has formed the core of a much larger Arab-Israeli conflict that has manifested itself in recurrent wars. The Disengagement Plan is an effort to put all this behind us.

As Foreign Minister Shalom told the 2004 Herzliya Conference:

“We are standing on the threshold of a new era, an era of hope, which may lead us to the end of the conflict. I hope that the Palestinian Authority, the leaders of the Arab states and the international community understand the magnitude of the hour and rise to the occasion. ”

In Prime Minister Sharon's concluding words at the Sharm e-Sheikh Summit:

“Together we can build a dam against the radical forces of yesterday, which threaten to carry us all into a whirlpool of blood and hatred. Together, we can promote relations between us and ignite a first ray of hope for all the people of the Middle East. Together, we can ensure our peoples lives of freedom and stability, prosperity and peace. ”



Bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families gather together in a call for peace



Young faces of hope

APPENDIX



Address by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the Fourth Herzliya Conference

(December 18, 2003)

(Translated from Hebrew)

Good Evening,

I congratulate the organizers of this conference for the important and interesting gathering which you have held here. During the past three days, you have been discussing Israel's situation. I, as Prime Minister, am responsible for the planning and implementation of the measures which will shape Israel's character during the next few years.

We are all entrusted with the duty of shaping the face of the Jewish and democratic State of Israel a state where there is an equal distribution of the burden, as well as the acceptance of rights and shouldering of duties by all sectors, through different forms of national service. A state where there is a good and efficient education system which educates a young generation imbued with values and national pride, which is capable of confronting the challenges of the modern world. A country whose economy is adapted to the advanced global market of the 21st century, where the product per capita crosses the \$20,000 line and is equal to that of most developed European countries. An immigrant-absorbing state which constitutes a national and spiritual center for all Jews of the world and is a source of attraction for thousands of immigrants each year. Aliyah is the central goal of the State of Israel.

This is the country we wish to shape. This is the country where our children will want to live.

I know that there is sometimes a tendency to narrow all of Israel's problems down to the political sphere, believing that once a solution

is found to Israel's problems with its neighbors, particularly the Palestinians, the other issues on the agenda will miraculously resolve themselves. I do not believe so. We are facing additional challenges, which must be addressed the economy, educating the young generation, immigrant absorption, enhancement of social cohesion and the improvement of relations between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

Like all Israeli citizens, I yearn for peace. I attach supreme importance to taking all steps, which will enable progress toward resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians. However, in light of the other challenges we are faced with, if the Palestinians do not make a similar effort toward a solution of the conflict I do not intend to wait for them indefinitely.

Seven months ago, my Government approved the Roadmap to peace, based on President George Bush's June 2002 speech. This is a balanced program for phased progress toward peace, to which both Israel and the Palestinians committed themselves. A full and genuine implementation of the program is the best way to achieve true peace. The Roadmap is the only political plan accepted by Israel, the Palestinians, the Americans and a majority of the international community. We are willing to proceed toward its implementation: two states, Israel and a Palestinian State living side by side in tranquility, security and peace.

The Roadmap is a clear and reasonable plan, and it is therefore possible and imperative to implement it. The concept behind this plan is that only security will lead to peace. And in

that sequence. Without the achievement of full security within the framework of which terror organizations will be dismantled it will not be possible to achieve genuine peace, a peace for generations. This is the essence of the Roadmap. The opposite perception, according to which the very signing of a peace agreement will produce security out of thin air, has already been tried in the past and failed miserably. And such will be the fate of any other plan which promotes this concept. These plans deceive the public and create false hope. There will be no peace before the eradication of terror.

The government under my leadership will not compromise on the realization of all phases of the Roadmap. It is incumbent upon the Palestinians to uproot the terrorist groups and to create a law-abiding society, which fights against violence and incitement. Peace and terror cannot coexist. The world is currently united in its unequivocal demand from the Palestinians to act toward the cessation of terrorism and the implementation of reforms. Only a transformation of the Palestinian Authority into a different authority will enable progress in the political process. The Palestinians must fulfill their obligations. A full and complete implementation will at the end of the process lead to peace and tranquility.

We began the implementation of the Roadmap at Aqaba, but the terrorist organizations joined with Yasser Arafat and sabotaged the process with a series of the most brutal terror attacks we have ever known.

Concurrent with the demand from the Palestinians to eliminate the terror organizations, Israel is taking and will continue to take steps to significantly improve the living conditions of the Palestinian population: Israel will remove closures and curfews and reduce the number of roadblocks; we will improve freedom of movement for the Palestinian population, including the passage of people and goods; we will increase the hours of operation at international border crossings; we will enable a large number of Palestinian merchants to conduct regular and

normal economic and trade relations with their Israeli counterparts, etc. All these measures are aimed at enabling better and freer movement for the Palestinian population not involved in terror.

In addition, subject to security coordination, we will transfer Palestinian towns to Palestinian security responsibility.

Israel will make every effort to assist the Palestinians and to advance the process.

Israel will fulfil the commitments taken upon itself. I have committed to the President of the United States that Israel will dismantle unauthorized outposts. It is my intention to implement this commitment. The State of Israel is governed by law, and the issue of the outposts is no exception. I understand the sensitivity; we will try to do this in the least painful way possible, but the unauthorized outposts will be dismantled. Period.

Israel will meet all its obligations with regard to construction in the settlements. There will be no construction beyond the existing construction line, no expropriation of land for construction, no special economic incentives and no construction of new settlements.

I take this opportunity to appeal to the Palestinians and repeat, as I said at Aqaba: it is not in our interest to govern you. We would like you to govern yourselves in your own country. A democratic Palestinian state with territorial contiguity in Judea and Samaria and economic viability, which would conduct normal relations of tranquility, security and peace with Israel. Abandon the path of terror and let us together stop the bloodshed. Let us move forward together towards peace.

We wish to speedily advance implementation of the Roadmap towards quiet and a genuine peace. We hope that the Palestinian Authority will carry out its part. However, if in a few months the Palestinians still continue to disregard their part in implementing the Roadmap then Israel will initiate the unilateral security step of disengagement from the Palestinians.

The purpose of the Disengagement Plan is to reduce terror as much as possible, and grant Israeli citizens the maximum level of security. The process of disengagement will lead to an improvement in the quality of life, and will help strengthen the Israeli economy. The unilateral steps which Israel will take in the framework of the Disengagement Plan will be fully coordinated with the United States. We must not harm our strategic coordination with the United States. These steps will increase security for the residents of Israel and relieve the pressure on the IDF and security forces in fulfilling the difficult tasks they are faced with. The Disengagement Plan is meant to grant maximum security and minimize friction between Israelis and Palestinians.

We are interested in conducting direct negotiations, but do not intend to hold Israeli society hostage in the hands of the Palestinians. I have already said we will not wait for them indefinitely.

The Disengagement Plan will include the redeployment of IDF forces along new security lines and a change in the deployment of settlements, which will reduce as much as possible the number of Israelis located in the heart of the Palestinian population. We will draw provisional security lines and the IDF will be deployed along them. Security will be provided by IDF deployment, the security fence and other physical obstacles. The Disengagement Plan will reduce friction between us and the Palestinians.

This reduction of friction will require the extremely difficult step of changing the deployment of some of the settlements. I would like to repeat what I have said in the past: In the framework of a future agreement, Israel will not remain in all the places where it is today. The relocation of settlements will be made, first and foremost, in order to draw the most efficient security line possible, thereby creating this disengagement between Israel and the Palestinians. This security line will not

constitute the permanent border of the State of Israel, however, as long as implementation of the Roadmap is not resumed, the IDF will be deployed along that line. Settlements which will be relocated are those, which will not be included in the territory of the State of Israel in the framework of any possible future permanent agreement. At the same time, in the framework of the Disengagement Plan, Israel will strengthen its control over those same areas in the Land of Israel which will constitute an inseparable part of the State of Israel in any future agreement. I know you would like to hear names, but we should leave something for later.

Israel will greatly accelerate the construction of the security fence. Today we can already see it taking shape. The rapid completion of the security fence will enable the IDF to remove roadblocks and ease the daily lives of the Palestinian population not involved in terror.

In order to enable the Palestinians to develop their economic and trade sectors, and to ensure that they will not be exclusively dependent on Israel, we will consider, in the framework of the Disengagement Plan, enabling in coordination with Jordan and Egypt the freer passage of people and goods through international border crossings, while taking the necessary security precautions.

I would like to emphasize: the Disengagement Plan is a security measure and not a political one. The steps which will be taken will not change the political reality between Israel and the Palestinians, and will not prevent the possibility of returning to the implementation of the Roadmap and reaching an agreed settlement.

The Disengagement Plan does not prevent the implementation of the Roadmap. Rather, it is a step Israel will take in the absence of any other option, in order to improve its security. The Disengagement Plan will be realized only in the event that the Palestinians continue to drag their feet and postpone implementation of the Roadmap.

Obviously, through the Disengagement Plan the Palestinians will receive much less than they would have received through direct negotiations as set out in the Roadmap.

According to circumstances, it is possible that parts of the Disengagement Plan that are supposed to provide maximum security to the citizens of Israel will be undertaken while also attempting to implement the Roadmap.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My life experience has taught me that for peace, as well as for war, we must have broad consensus. We must preserve our unity, even in the midst of a difficult, internal debate.

In the past three years, the Palestinian terrorist organizations have put us to a difficult test. Their plan to break the spirit of Israeli society has not succeeded. The citizens of Israel have managed to step into the breach, support each other, lend a helping hand, volunteer and contribute.

I believe that this path of unity must be continued today. Whether we will be able to advance the Roadmap, or will have to implement the Disengagement Plan, experience has taught us that, together, through broad national consensus, we can do great things.

Let us not be led astray. Any path will be complicated, strewn with obstacles, and obligate us to act with discretion and responsibility. I am confident that, just as we have managed to overcome the challenges of the past, we will stand together and succeed today.

We will always be guided by the words of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who said, on the day after the Declaration of Independence:

"These days, our purpose is only to build the State of Israel with love and faith, in Jewish brotherhood, and to defend it with all our spirit, and as long as necessary. We are still in the midst of a difficult battle, one that has two fronts: political and military. Let us not embellish our deeds and, of course, our words, with grandiose names. We must remain humble. We achieved what we have achieved by standing on the shoulders of previous generations, and we accomplished what we

have accomplished by preserving our precious legacy, the legacy of a small nation which has endured suffering and tribulations, but which is, nevertheless, great and eternal in spirit, vision, faith and virtue."

I am also a great believer in the resilience of this small, brave nation, which has endured suffering and tribulations. I am confident that, united in the power of our faith, we will be able to succeed in any path we choose.

*Thank you very much,
and happy Hannukah.*



The Cabinet Resolution Regarding the Disengagement Plan

(June 6, 2004) [as published by the Prime Minister's Office]

Addendum A – Revised Disengagement Plan - Main Principles

1. Background – Political and Security Implications

The State of Israel is committed to the peace process and aspires to reach an agreed resolution of the conflict based upon the vision of US President George Bush. The State of Israel believes that it must act to improve the current situation.

The State of Israel has come to the conclusion that there is currently no reliable Palestinian partner with which it can make progress in a two-sided peace process. Accordingly, it has developed a plan of revised disengagement (hereinafter – the plan), based on the following considerations:

One. The stalemate dictated by the current situation is harmful. In order to break out of this stalemate, the State of Israel is required to initiate moves not dependent on Palestinian cooperation.

Two. The purpose of the plan is to lead to a better security, political, economic and demographic situation.

Three. In any future permanent status arrangement, there will be no Israeli towns and villages in the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, it is clear that in the West Bank, there are areas which will be part of the State of Israel, including major Israeli population centers, cities, towns

and villages, security areas and other places of special interest to Israel.

Four. The State of Israel supports the efforts of the United States, operating alongside the international community, to promote the reform process, the construction of institutions and the improvement of the economy and welfare of the Palestinian residents, in order that a new Palestinian leadership will emerge and prove itself capable of fulfilling its commitments under the Roadmap.

Five. Relocation from the Gaza Strip and from an area in Northern Samaria

should reduce friction with the Palestinian population.

Six. The completion of the plan will serve to dispel the claims regarding Israel's responsibility for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Seven. The process set forth in the plan is without prejudice to the relevant agreements between the State of Israel and the Palestinians. Relevant arrangements shall continue to apply.

Eight. International support for this plan is widespread and important. This support is essential in order to bring the Palestinians to implement in practice their obligations to combat terrorism and effect reforms as required by the Roadmap, thus enabling the parties to return to the path of negotiation.

2. Main Elements

A. The process:

The required preparatory work for the implementation of the plan will be carried out (including staff work to determine criteria, definitions, evaluations, and preparations for required legislation).

Immediately upon completion of the preparatory work, a discussion will be held by the Government in order to make a decision concerning the relocation of settlements, taking into consideration the circumstances prevailing at that time – whether or not to relocate, and which settlements.

The towns and villages will be classified into four groups, as follows:

1. Group A – Morag, Netzarim, Kfar Darom
2. Group B – the villages of Northern Samaria (Ganim, Kadim, Sa-Nur and Homesh).
3. Group C – the towns and villages of Gush Katif
4. Group D – the villages of the Northern Gaza Strip (Elei Sinai, Dugit and Nissanit)

It is clarified that, following the completion of the aforementioned preparations, the Government will convene periodically in order to decide separately on the question of whether or not to relocate, with respect to each of the aforementioned groups.

3. The continuation of the aforementioned process is subject to the resolutions that the Government will pass, as mentioned above in Article 2, and will be implemented in accordance with the content of those resolutions.

3.1 The Gaza Strip

1. The State of Israel will evacuate the Gaza Strip, including all existing Israeli towns and villages, and will redeploy outside the Strip. This will not include military deployment in the area of the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt ("the Philadelphi Route") as detailed below.

2. Upon completion of this process, there shall no longer be any permanent presence of Israeli security forces in the areas of Gaza Strip territory which have been evacuated.

3.2 The West Bank

3. The State of Israel will evacuate an area in Northern Samaria (Ganim, Kadim, Sa-Nur and Homesh), and all military installations in this area, and will redeploy outside the vacated area.
4. Upon completion of this process, there shall no longer be any permanent presence of Israeli security forces in this area.
5. The move will enable territorial contiguity for Palestinians in the Northern Samaria area.
6. The State of Israel will assist, together with the international community, in improving the transportation infrastructure in the West Bank in order to facilitate the contiguity of Palestinian transportation.
7. The process will facilitate normal life and Palestinian economic and commercial activity in the West Bank.

3.3 The intention is to complete the planned relocation process by the end of 2005.

B. The Security Fence:

The State of Israel will continue building the Security Fence, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the Government. The route will take into account humanitarian considerations.

3. Security Situation Following the Relocation

One. The Gaza Strip:

1. The State of Israel will guard and monitor the external land perimeter of the Gaza Strip, will continue to maintain exclusive authority in Gaza air space, and will continue

to exercise security activity in the sea off the coast of the Gaza Strip.

2. The Gaza Strip shall be demilitarized and shall be devoid of weaponry, the presence of which does not accord with the Israeli-Palestinian agreements.
3. The State of Israel reserves its fundamental right of self-defense, both preventive and reactive, including where necessary the use of force, in respect of threats emanating from the Gaza Strip.

Two. The West Bank:

1. Upon completion of the evacuation of the Northern Samaria area, no permanent Israeli military presence will remain in this area.
2. The State of Israel reserves its fundamental right of self-defense, both preventive and reactive, including where necessary the use of force, in respect of threats emanating from the Northern Samaria area.
3. In other areas of the West Bank, current security activity will continue. However, as circumstances require, the State of Israel will consider reducing such activity in Palestinian cities.
4. The State of Israel will work to reduce the number of internal checkpoints throughout the West Bank.

4. Military Installations and Infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and Northern Samaria

In general, these will be dismantled and evacuated, with the exception of those which the State of Israel decides to transfer to another party.

5. Security Assistance to the Palestinians

The State of Israel agrees that by coordination with it, advice, assistance and training will be provided to the Palestinian security forces for the implementation of their obligations to combat terrorism and maintain public order, by American, British, Egyptian, Jordanian or other experts, as agreed therewith.

No foreign security presence may enter the Gaza Strip and/or the West Bank without being coordinated with and approved by the State of Israel.

6. The Border Area Between the Gaza Strip and Egypt

(Philadelphi Route)

The State of Israel will continue to maintain a military presence along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt (Philadelphi Route). This presence is an essential security requirement. At certain locations, security considerations may require some widening of the area in which the military activity is conducted.

Subsequently, the evacuation of this area will be considered. Evacuation of the area will be dependent, inter alia, on the security situation and the extent of cooperation with Egypt in establishing a reliable alternative arrangement.

If and when conditions permit the evacuation of this area, the State of Israel will be willing to consider the possibility of the establishment of a seaport and airport in the Gaza Strip, in accordance with arrangements to be agreed with Israel.

7 Real Estate Assets

In general, residential dwellings and sensitive structures, including synagogues, will not

remain.* The State of Israel will aspire to transfer other facilities, including industrial, commercial and agricultural ones, to a third, international party which will put them to use for the benefit of the Palestinian population that is not involved in terror.

The area of the Erez industrial zone will be transferred to the responsibility of an agreed upon Palestinian or international party.

The State of Israel will explore, together with Egypt, the possibility of establishing a joint industrial zone on the border of the Gaza Strip, Egypt and Israel.

8. Civil Infrastructure and Arrangements

Infrastructure relating to water, electricity, sewage and telecommunications will remain in place.

In general, Israel will continue, for full price, to supply electricity, water, gas and petrol to the Palestinians, in accordance with current arrangements.

Other existing arrangements, such as those relating to water and the electro-magnetic sphere shall remain in force.

9. Activity of Civilian International Organizations

The State of Israel recognizes the great importance of the continued activity of international humanitarian organizations and others engaged in civil development, assisting the Palestinian population.

The State of Israel will coordinate with these organizations arrangements to facilitate their activities.

The State of Israel proposes that an international apparatus be established (along the lines of the AHLC), with the agreement of

* [Comment: As of early April 2005, a final decision has yet to be taken regarding the disposition of Israeli residences.]

Israel and international elements which will work to develop the Palestinian economy.

10. Economic Arrangements

In general, the economic arrangements currently in operation between the State of Israel and the Palestinians shall remain in force. These arrangements include, inter alia:

One. The entry and exit of goods between the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the State of Israel and abroad.

Two. The monetary regime.

Three. Tax and customs envelope arrangements.

Four. Postal and telecommunications arrangements.

Five. The entry of workers into Israel, in accordance with the existing criteria.

In the longer term, and in line with Israel's interest in encouraging greater Palestinian economic independence, the State of Israel expects to reduce the number of Palestinian workers entering Israel, to the point that it ceases completely. The State of Israel supports the development of sources of employment in the Gaza Strip and in Palestinian areas of the West Bank, by international elements.

11. International Passages

a. The International Passage Between the Gaza Strip and Egypt

- 1) The existing arrangements shall continue.
- 2) The State of Israel is interested in moving the passage to the "three borders" area, south of its current location. This would need to be effected in coordination with the Government of Egypt. This move would enable the hours of operation of the passage to be extended.

- b. The International Passages Between the West Bank and Jordan:
The existing arrangements shall continue.

12. Erez Crossing Point

The Erez crossing point will be moved to a location within Israel in a time frame to be determined separately by the Government.

13. Conclusion

The goal is that implementation of the plan will lead to improving the situation and breaking the current deadlock. If and when there is evidence from the Palestinian side of its willingness, capability and implementation in practice of the fight against terrorism, full cessation of terrorism and violence and the institution of reform as required by the Roadmap, it will be possible to return to the track of negotiation and dialogue.

Addendum C – Format of the Preparatory Work for the Revised Disengagement Plan

1. A process of relocation involves many significant personal repercussions for the relocated residents. In implementing the plan, the Government of Israel is obliged to consider the implications for the relocated residents, assist them, and ease the process for them as much as possible. The difficulties and sensitivities involved in the process must be born in mind by the Government and by those who implement the process.
2. The Government of Israel attributes great importance to conducting a dialogue with the population designated for relocation, regarding various issues relating to the implementation of the plan - including with respect to relocation and compensation - and will act to conduct such a dialogue.

Establishing an Organizational Framework

3. An organizational framework will be established with the purpose of addressing and assisting in all matters related to the implementation of the plan.
4. The Ministerial Committee for National Security (The Security Cabinet) will accom-

pany and direct the Revised Disengagement Plan, including acceleration of the construction of the Security Fence, with the exception of the decisions concerning relocation (Article 2.A (2) and (3) in Addendum A).

The Security Cabinet will be responsible for the implementation of this Government Resolution.

5. A Steering Committee is hereby established that will be responsible for coordinating the issues pertaining to the Revised Disengagement Plan. The Steering Committee will report to the Security Cabinet on its activities, and bring before it issues which require a decision by the political echelon. The Steering Committee will include the following members:

One. Head of the National Security Council – Chairman

Two. Representatives of the Ministry of Defense, the IDF and the Israel Police

Three. Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office

Four. Director-General of the Ministry of Finance

Five. Director-General of the Ministry of Justice

- Six.** Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 - Seven.** Director-General of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor
 - Eight.** Director-General of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Nine.** Director-General of the Ministry of National Infrastructures
 - Ten.** Director-General of the Ministry of the Interior
 - Eleven.** Director-General of the Ministry of Construction and Housing
6. A Committee on Relocation, Compensation, and Alternative Settlement is hereby established, which will be charged with the task of preparing legislation regarding relocation and compensation, as well as details of the principles and indexes for compensation, including incentives, advance payments, and compensatory aspects of relocation alternatives in priority areas, in accordance with Government policy. The Committee's recommendations will be presented to the Security Cabinet and serve as a basis for the draft bill on this issue.
- This committee will constitute the exclusive authorized body for the coordination and conducting of dialogue with the population designated for relocation and compensation, and with all other bodies related to the issue of compensation – until the completion of the legislation. The Committee will be able to establish professional sub-committees, as it deems necessary, for the sake of fulfilling its tasks. The committee will include the following members:
- One.** Director-General of the Ministry of Justice – Chairman
 - Two.** Representative of the Ministry of Finance
 - Three.** Representative of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor
 - Four.** Representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Five.** Representative of the Prime Minister's Office
7. The Jewish Agency for Israel, as a body involved in settlement, will act in accordance with instructions from the Steering Committee and in coordination with the Committee on Relocation, Compensation and Alternative Settlement. The role of the Jewish Agency will be to carry out the activities required for alternative settlement, either agricultural or communal, for those among the relocated civilian population who so desire.
8. **One.** An Executive Administration is hereby established in the Prime Minister's Office which will be subordinate to the Steering Committee. Its task will be to implement this Government Resolution with regard to the relocation of civilians and compensation.
- Two.** The Executive Administration will be authorized to grant advance payments to those eligible for compensation - which will be counted against the compensation to be owed to them - according to terms that will be determined by the Committee on Relocation, Compensation, and Alternative Settlement, and in accordance with the instructions and procedures established by the said Committee.
- Three.** The Head of the Executive Administration will hold the rank of Ministry Director-General.
9. All government ministries and other governmental bodies will forward, without delay, all information required for the aforementioned organizational frameworks to fulfill their tasks.

Legislation

10. **One.** The Ministry of Justice will formulate and the Prime Minister will submit, as soon as possible, a draft bill to the Ministerial Committee for Legislation, which will include provisions regarding relocation and compensation for those eligible, as well as the authority necessary for this purpose.
- Two.** Soon thereafter, the Government will submit the bill to the Knesset.
- Three.** The IDF Military Commanders in the Areas will issue the Security Legislation necessary for the implementation of the Government's Resolutions.

Budget

11. **One.** Within one month of the adoption of this Resolution, the Director of the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with the Director General of the Prime Minister's Office and the Director General of the Ministry of Justice, will allocate the required budget and other resources necessary for the Steering Committee, the Committee on Relocation, Compensation and Alternative Settlement, the Executive Administration and the Jewish Agency to carry out their activities.
- Two.** The 2005 Budget and subsequent budgets will be adjusted periodically to conform with the process and Government Resolutions on this issue.
- Three.** For the sake of commencing its activities, the Executive Administration will be allocated, in the first stage, 10 staff positions.

Transition Instructions

12. During the interim period from the date this Resolution is passed, the following instructions will apply to the towns, villages and areas included in the plan (hereafter - the towns and villages), for the purpose of making preparations on the one hand, while maintaining normal and continuous daily life on the other:
- One.** Municipal and communal activities related to the course of normal life and services to which residents are entitled will continue unaffected, including services provided by the regional council, as well as security, education, welfare, telecommunications, mail, public transportation, electricity, water, gas, petrol, health services, banks and all other services customarily provided to towns and villages prior to this Resolution.
- Two.** Government plans for construction and development that have yet to commence will not be advanced for implementation.
- Three.**
- Four.** Nothing stated in this Resolution is intended to undermine Government Resolution no. 150, dated August 2, 1996, regarding other areas. The aforementioned Government Resolution no. 150 will also apply to towns and villages for the purpose of approval prior to planning and land allocation.

Exceptional Cases Committee

13. An Exceptional Cases Committee will be established which will be authorized to permit the implementation of any plan which was frozen, in accordance with the provisions

above, and authorized to decide not to advance plans even if their implementation has already commenced, following an examination of each individual case, and in keeping with criteria that it shall establish.

The Exceptional Cases Committee will be headed by the Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office, and will include the Directors-General of the Ministries of Finance and Justice.

Decisions of the Exceptional Cases Committee may be appealed to the Security Cabinet, in any instance where they are brought before it by a member of the Government.

Principles for Compensation

14. a. The date which determines the right for compensation is the date of the adoption of this Government Resolution.
- b. Those entitled to compensation will receive fair and suitable compensation, as will be set out in the law legislated for this purpose.



Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Address to the Knesset – The Vote on the Disengagement Plan

(October 25, 2004)

[translated from Hebrew]

Mr. Speaker, Members of Knesset,

This is a fateful hour for Israel. We are on threshold of a difficult decision, the likes of which we have seldom faced, the significance of which for the future of our country in this region is consistent with the difficulty, pain, and dispute it arouses within us. You know that I do not say these things with a light heart to the representatives of the nation and to the entire nation watching and listening to every word uttered here in the Knesset today.

This is a people that has courageously faced and still faces the burden and terror of the ongoing war, which has continued from generation to generation; in which, as in a relay race, fathers pass the guns to their sons; in which the boundary between the front line and the home front has long been erased; in which schools and hotels, restaurants and marketplaces, cafes and buses have also become targets for cruel terrorism and premeditated murder.

Today, this nation wants to know what decision this house will make at the end of this stormy discussion. What will we say to them, and what message will we convey to them? For me, this decision is unbearably difficult. During my years as a fighter and commander, as a politician, Member of Knesset, as a minister in Israel's governments and as prime minister, I have never faced so difficult a decision.

I know the implications and impact of the Knesset's decision on the lives of thousands

of Israelis who have lived in the Gaza Strip for many years, who were sent there on behalf of the governments of Israel, and who built homes there, planted trees and grew flowers, and who gave birth to sons and daughters, who have not known any other home. I am well aware of the fact that I sent them and took part in this enterprise, and many of these people are my personal friends. I am well aware of their pain, rage, and despair.

However, as much as I understand everything they are going through during these days and everything they will face as a result of the necessary decision to be made in the Knesset today, I also believe in the necessity of taking the step of disengagement in these areas, with all the pain it entails, and I am determined to complete this mission. I am firmly convinced and truly believe that this disengagement will strengthen Israel's hold over territory which is essential to our existence, and will be welcomed and appreciated by those near and far, reduce animosity, break through boycotts and sieges and advance us along the path of peace with the Palestinians and our other neighbors.

I am accused of deceiving the people and the voters, because I am taking steps which are in total opposition to past things I have said and deeds I have done. This is a false accusation. Both during the elections and as prime minister, I have repeatedly and publicly said that I support the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel. I have repeatedly and openly

said that I am willing to make painful compromises in order to put an end to this ongoing and malignant conflict between those who struggle over this land, and that I would do my utmost in order to bring peace.

And I wish, Mr. Chairman, to say that many years before, in 1988, in a meeting with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and with the ministers of the Likud, I said there that I believe that if we do not want to be pushed back to the 1967 lines, the territory should be divided.

As one who fought in all of Israel's wars, and learned from personal experience that, without proper force, we do not have a chance of surviving in this region, which does not show mercy towards the weak, I have also have learned from experience that the sword alone cannot decide this bitter dispute in this land.

I have been told that the disengagement will be interpreted as a shameful withdrawal under pressure, and will increase the terror campaign, present Israel as weak, and will show our people as a nation unwilling to fight and to stand up for itself. I reject that statement outright. We have the strength to defend this country, and to strike at the enemy which seeks to destroy us.

And there are those who tell me that, in exchange for a genuine signed peace agreement, they too would be willing to make these painful compromises.

However, regrettably, we do not have a partner on the other side with whom to conduct genuine dialogue, in order to achieve a peace agreement. Even prime ministers of Israel who declared their willingness to relinquish the maximum territory of our homeland were answered with fire and hostility. Recently, the chairman of the Palestinian Authority declared that "a million shaheeds will break through to Jerusalem." In the choice between a responsible and wise action in history, which may lead to painful compromise and a "holy war" to destroy Israel, Yasser Arafat chose the latter — the path of blood, fire, and shaheeds. He seeks to turn a national conflict that can be terminated through mutual under-

standing into a religious war between Islam and Jews, and even to spill the blood of Jews who live far away.

Israel has many hopes and faces extreme dangers. The most prominent danger is Iran, which is making every effort to acquire nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and establishing an enormous terror network together with Syria in Lebanon.

And I ask you: What are we doing and what are we struggling over in the face of these terrible dangers? Are we not capable of uniting to meet this threat? This is the true question.

The Disengagement Plan does not replace negotiations and is not meant to permanently freeze the situation which will be created. It is an essential and necessary step in a situation which currently does not enable genuine negotiations for peace. However, everything remains open for a future agreement, which will hopefully be achieved when this murderous terror ends, and our neighbors will realize that they cannot triumph over us in this land.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I will read several lines from a famous essay which was published in the midst of the Arab Revolt of 1936 — and we must bear in mind that the Jewish community in Israel numbered less than 400,000. This essay by Moshe Beilinson was published in "Davar", as I mentioned, during the murderous Arab Revolt of 1936 (and I quote):

"How much longer? People ask. How much longer? Until the strength of Israel in its land will condemn and defeat in advance any enemy attack; until the most enthusiastic and bold in any enemy camp will know there are no means to break the strength of Israel in its land, because the necessity of life is with it, and the truth of life is with it, and there is no other way but to accept it. This is the essence of this campaign."

I am convinced that everything we have done since then confirms these emphatic words.

We have no desire to permanently rule over millions of Palestinians, who double their numbers every generation. Israel, which wishes to be

an exemplary democracy, will not be able to bear such a reality over time. The Disengagement Plan presents the possibility of opening a gate to a different reality.

Today, I wish to address our Arab neighbors. Already in our Declaration of Independence, in the midst of a cruel war, Israel, which was born in blood, extended its hand in peace to those who fought against it and sought to destroy it by force (and I quote): “We appeal – in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months – to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the state on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.” A long time has passed since then. This land and this region have known more wars, and have known all the wars between the wars, terrorism and the difficult counteractions undertaken by Israel, with the sole purpose of defending the lives of its citizens. In this ongoing war, many among the civilian population, among the innocent, were killed. And tears met tears.

I would like you to know that we did not seek to build our lives in this homeland on your ruins. Many years ago, Ze’ev Jabotinsky wrote in a poem his vision for partnership and peace among the peoples of this land (and I quote): “There he will be saturated with plenty and joy, the son of the Arab, the son of Nazareth, and my son.”

We were attacked and stood firm, with our backs to the sea. Many fell in the battle, and many lost their homes and fields and orchards, and became refugees. This is the way of war. However, war is not inevitable and predestined. Even today, we regret the loss of innocent lives in your midst. Our way is not one of intentional killing.

Forty-eight years ago, on the eve of our Independence Day in 1956, against the background of the return of the bodies of ten terrorists who committed crimes in Israel, murderous acts in Israel, and who were delivered in wooden coffins to the Egyptians at a border crossing in

the Gaza Strip, on this, the Hebrew poet Natan Alterman wrote the following:

“Arabia, enemy unknown to you, you will awake when you rise against me, My life serves as witness with my back against the wall and to my history and my God,

“Enemy, the power of whose rage in the face of those who rise to destroy him until the day

“Will be similar only to the force of his brotherhood in a fraternal covenant between one nation and another.”

This was during the time of the terrorist killings and our retaliatory raids.

Members of Knesset,

With your permission, I wish to end with a quotation from Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who at the end of December 1977 said on this podium (and I quote):

“Where does this irresponsible language come from, in addition to other things which were said? I once said, during an argument with people from Gush Emunim, that I love them today, and will continue to like them tomorrow. I told them: you are wonderful pioneers, builders of the land, settlers on barren soil, in rain and through winter, through all difficulties. However, you have one weakness – you have developed among yourselves a messianic complex.

“You must remember that there were days, before you were born or were only small children, when other people risked their lives day and night, worked and toiled, made sacrifices and performed their tasks without a hint of a messianic complex. And I call on you today, my good friends from Gush Emunim, to perform your tasks with no less modesty than your predecessors, on other days and nights.

“We do not require anyone to supervise the Kashrut of our commitment to the Land of Israel! We have dedicated our lives to the Land of Israel and to the struggle for its liberation, and will continue to do so.”

I call on the people of Israel to unite at this decisive hour. We must find a common denominator for some form of “necessary unity” which

will enable us to cope with these fateful days with understanding, and through our common destiny, and which will allow us to construct a dam against brotherly hatred which pushes many over the edge. We have already paid an unbearably high price for murderous fanaticism. We must find the root which brings us all together, and must carry out our actions with the wisdom and responsibility which allow us to lead our lives here as a mature and experienced nation. I call on you to support me at this decisive time.

Thank you.



Excerpt from an Address by Foreign Minister Shalom to the Israel-British Chamber of Commerce

(February 2, 2005)

... This is a time of renewed hope and optimism in our region. The elections in Iraq and in the PA, together with the determined leadership of the United States, offer the prospect of a real and positive shift in the region's dynamics, towards greater democracy, greater accountability, greater freedom and greater prosperity. These developments pose a direct challenge to the forces of extremism – led by Iran, Syria and of course al-Qaida – which seek to undermine all possibility of progress towards peace and stability.

In the Palestinian context, the demise of Arafat and the election of Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] offer us a window of opportunity which must be seized, in order to bring an end to terrorism, and the beginning of real and positive change. Abu Mazen has been given a clear mandate for such change. With his election, the age of Palestinian excuses has come to an end.

The Palestinian leader has at his disposal the means to stop the attacks on Israel's civilians and communities. What he needs to show us - and to show his own people - is that he has the will to use them to bring Palestinian terror to an end. Israel is ready to work together with the Palestinian leadership in order to improve the security and wellbeing of our peoples, on the way to a lasting peace between us.

We accept the Roadmap and we are ready to implement it, in accordance with its performance-based structure and sequence. We are also ready to coordinate key aspects of the disengagement plan with the Palestinian side. We will act to ensure that constructive Palestinian steps are reciprocated.

Indeed, if security conditions allow, Israel will transfer security control of key Palestinian towns in the coming days. We are already acting to ease conditions for the Palestinians, by opening border crossings, facilitating the transfer of funds, and so on. We also recognize the central importance of the economic dimension, and we are actively encouraging the international community to mobilize resources to help rehabilitate the Palestinian economy. In this context, we welcome the interest of the private sector in promoting business and investment opportunities in the PA.

All these issues will be discussed in the Summit to be held this coming Tuesday in Sharm e-Sheikh between Prime Minister Sharon and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, together with President Mubarak and King Abdullah. This summit is of critical importance to the future of our peace efforts. Its purpose is to address the issues head-on, not just to have another photo-opportunity.

The real test is the test of actions, not of declarations; the test of outcomes, not ceremonies. We must remember: progress towards peace will not be possible without consistent and effective Palestinian action on the ground to end the terror against Israel's civilians, as required by the Roadmap.



Statement by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the Sharm e-Sheikh Summit

(February 8, 2005)

Good afternoon.

I would like to thank you, the President of Egypt, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, on your welcome initiative and the kind hospitality for this important summit. We all hope and pray that this day will be remembered as the day on which the process began to move forward towards completion, towards the goal of a tranquil, dignified and peaceful life for all the peoples of the Middle East.

I also wish to convey special congratulations to Your Majesty, King Abdullah, on the birth of your son Hashem and on the occasion of your birthday. May you live a long life filled with joy, and be able to lead your people to tranquility and prosperity, and hopefully we can, together, strengthen the relations between us.

Congratulations are also due to you, the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, on your impressive victory in the Palestinian Authority elections. Your victory and the path on which you wish to lead your people can mark a direction of real change to your people, which will affect the entire region. I hope that you will be able to lead your people on the path of democracy and maintenance of law and order, until the establishment of an independent and democratic Palestinian state.

2005 began as a year of great opportunity for all the peoples of the region, first and foremost for Israelis and Palestinians. We must all ensure that this opportunity is not missed.

We have an opportunity to break off from the path of blood which has been forced on us over the past four years. We have an opportunity to

start on a new path. For the first time in a long time, there exists in our region hope for a better future for our children and grandchildren.

We must move forward cautiously. This is a very fragile opportunity, that the extremists will want to exploit. They want to close the window of opportunity for us and allow our two peoples to drown in their blood. If we do not act now – they may be successful in their scheme.

There is only one answer to them: We must all announce here today that violence will not win, that violence will not be allowed to murder hope. We must all make a commitment not to agree for a temporary solution, not to allow violence to raise its head, but to act together, determinedly, to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure, to disarm and subdue it once and for all. Only by crushing terror and violence will we build peace.

I have no intention of missing this opportunity - because we must not let the new spirit, which grants our peoples hope, pass us by and leave us empty-handed.

That is why we have acted quickly and with determination, with an understanding of the needs of the Palestinian side. Over the past few days, we reached a number of understandings with our Palestinian colleagues, which will enable us to grant both peoples tranquility and security for the near future. Today, in my meeting with Chairman Abbas, we agreed that all Palestinians will stop all acts of violence against all Israelis everywhere and in parallel, Israel will cease all its military activity against all Palestinians anywhere. We hope that today we are starting a new

period of tranquility and hope. Furthermore, we agreed on a process of transferring security responsibility for Palestinian areas. I informed Chairman Abbas of our intention to take a series of confidence-building measures: soon we will release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, and also establish a joint committee to explore future release of prisoners.

We wish to conduct genuine and honest dialogue in order to transform these first steps into a sound basis for the foundation of our relations.

I am determined to carry out the Disengagement Plan which I initiated. The Disengagement Plan was initiated by a unilateral decision. Now, if new change does emerge on the Palestinian side, the disengagement can bring hope and become the new starting point for a coordinated, successful process.

The Disengagement Plan can pave the way to implementation of the Roadmap, to which we are committed and which we want to implement. We are prepared to actively fulfill all our obligations, and expect the other side to carry out all its obligations.

Only actions and not words - this is the only way to attain the vision of two states living side-by-side in peace and tranquility.

With your permission, I wish to address the citizens of both peoples:

To our Palestinian neighbors, I assure you that we have a genuine intention to respect your right to live independently and in dignity. I have already said that Israel has no desire to continue to govern over you and control your fate. We in Israel have had to painfully wake up from our dreams, and we are determined to overcome all the obstacles which might stand in our path in order to realize the new chance which has been created.

You, too, must prove that you have the strength and the courage to compromise, abandon unrealistic dreams, subdue the forces which oppose peace and live in peace and mutual respect side-by-side with us.

To the citizens of Israel, I say: we have passed difficult years, faced the most painful experiences and overcame them. The future lies before us. We are required to take difficult and controversial steps, but we must not miss the opportunity to try to achieve what we have wished for, for so many years: security, tranquility and peace.

And one final call to our hosts and to the Arab leaders of the region: come let us join hands and create a new atmosphere of openness and tolerance in our region. Together we can build a dam against the radical forces of yesterday which threaten to carry us all into a whirlpool of blood and hatred. Together, we can promote relations between us and ignite a first ray of hope for all the people of the Middle East. Together, we can ensure our peoples lives of freedom and stability, prosperity and peace.

May we all be found deserving of this great opportunity which we have been granted.

Israel's
DISENGAGEMENT
Renewing the Peace Process *Plan*



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