



AMIR PERETZ

Member of Parliament, State of Israel

First of all I would like to thank the IFRI organization for the conference that is taking place here in Morocco. Here with me, are two other members of the Israeli parliament - Meir Sheerit, former minister of justice and Ahmad Tibi who represents the Arab – Israeli citizens.

I was born in Morocco and feel that a big part of my values as a person **were acquired here**. Even though I left as a young boy, the strengths that I received here have been a part of me all through the way.

I want to send a message of peace to his Majesty the king of Morocco and wish him all the very best.

For a big part of Israeli citizens his majesty and the Kingdom of Morocco, **remains a lasting symbol** and example of possible coexistence, rooted deep in our hearts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I could have talked about many issues which occupy many countries around the world - Financial crisis, human rights and poverty. **I could have talked about** security threats, Iran and it's race **for obtaining unconventional weapons**, sources of terror and their effect on personal security in each and every country.

But today I want to focus in the **chance for an optimistic future** in all the Middle East states, especially a better future between Israel and the Palestinians.

Members of the conference,

Some of us are experienced in war, and we all know that war comes at a heavy price for all sides. The question who won and who lost is very important, but it is not the main question. At the end of every war there are questions each side **needs to ask themselves**. Why didn't we manage to prevent the war? how can we prevent the next war? and whether the war created new insights or **new political leverage** which will lead to understandings and peace.

There is a price for war and a price for peace. Peace agreements are **bound with compromises** on both sides. Many leaders are afraid of the moment of signing an agreement which will **make them appear weak** in their people's eyes, but for me every leader who **signs a peace agreement** is a brave leader.

I want to use this stage to say clearly. I am willing to pay the price of peace. I'm sure that there is a majority among Israel's citizens who would be willing to pay that price.

Ladies and Gentleman,

On Tuesday the 28th of September, the Israeli foreign minister, Ivet Liberman, said at the UN, that there is no chance to reach a **sustainable peace agreement** with the Palestinians in the near future. I absolutely object to that statement. I believe that we can reach a peace agreement, and that every effort **needs to be made** in order to change the current reality with the Palestinians, and with Syria.



As for Syria, there were **a number of opportunities in recent years** which could have ended the conflict. The end of conflict is based on withdrawal from the Golan Heights on Israel's part, and stopping the support of terror and **military alliance with Iran** on Syria's part. **For this kind of agreement** I am willing to pay the price of giving the Golan Heights back, and many Israelis **would as well**.

Members of the conference,

As for an agreement with the Palestinians - The agreement needs to result with a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel, based on the 67 borders and the principle of agreed "one for one" territory exchange. The compromises would **have to include** a solution in Jerusalem. We must find the right way for the city to remain **open and accessible** for all religions. We need to find the way to turn Jerusalem into the foundation of **peace and cosmopolitan reality** of the Middle East.

There are of course **other complicated subjects** in the negotiation. For example - the issue of refugees on one side, and the issue of **security arrangement** on the other. Have no doubt! the state of Israel has the right for self defence, and every Israeli citizen should feel safe in his house.

Unfortunately, the atmosphere of fear has negative influence on people from both sides in their support of peace.

As I said, I believe that when the agreement will be ready, the majority of the people will overcome this fear and will **support the agreement**, because they hope for a better future for the children and the next generations to come.

I want to use this opportunity to thank Mr. Migel Angel Moratinos, **Spain's minister of Foreign Affairs** for his efforts to promote the peace process in the Middle east. He did it in the past in all of his positions, and he continues to do so these days.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today in Israel there is a government that is led by Benjamin Netanyahu.

The majority of the coalition parties are from the right wing. The point of view of those parties **is against compromise in the West Bank**.

The Labour party, that I am a member of, also joined the government. I objected to the decision that the Labour party joined this government, and at this time **most of my efforts are invested in creating a new dynamic** that eventually will establish a new government with a new policy.

Ladies and Gentleman,

I would like to **express my appreciation** to the leaders of the Arab league for their decision **not to stop the talks** and to allow extension of time to find a solution to renew the direct talks.

I believe we should do what is necessary to strengthen the relationship with our Palestinian partners, and this means **we should extend the settlement freeze**.

For me, extending the settlements freeze **is an Israeli interest**. Regardless of the needed negotiation. **but the least we need today** is to extend the freeze as long as the talks are taking place, with the hope, that the first paragraph from the core issues that will be resolved - **will be the borders issue**.

If we find the solution for the question of the borders and we will have agreed maps between Israel and the Palestinians, then everyone can build as they like in their own territory.



For the majority of Israelis the question of the settlements is less important than **the important goal of peace**, which will change our reality for generations to come.

I believe that if we put into motion this real will and real opportunity to reach the agreement with the power from the international community – led by president Obama, we might see this dream comes true.