Remarks by the Vice President Commemorating U.N. Vote Establishing Israel

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ambassador Danon, Ambassador Lauder, Secretary Mnuchin, Minister Katz, ambassadors from over 60 countries, distinguished guests, my fellow Americans, and my fellow friends of Israel.

We gather today on the eve of a historic anniversary to celebrate what happened here, in this very hall, 70 years ago when the United Nations declared to the modern world an ancient truth, that the Jewish people have a natural, irrevocable right to an independent state in their ancestral and eternal homeland. (Applause.)

And in this room they called for the creation of the Jewish State of Israel. I am deeply humbled to join you today to commemorate this vote and to celebrate the courage, the perseverance, and faith of the Jewish people that made it possible.

And I bring the congratulations, as well, and the unwavering support of a great champion of the State of Israel -- and a life-long friend of her people -- the 45th President of the United States of America, President Donald Trump. (Applause.)

The President asked me to be here today to remember the day when the United States of America joined 32 other nations to support the creation of the State of Israel and to express our appreciation for all who support the Jewish people and the Jewish State of Israel to this day.

But most of all, the President sent me here with a simple message -- it's the same message he delivered earlier this year when he visited the city of Jerusalem -- that under our administration, America will always stand with Israel. (Applause.)

It’s fitting that we gather today in this hall. This building is no stranger to history. Over nearly 80 years, it has hosted some of the world’s greatest achievements in technology, art, and international diplomacy. But what happened here in 1947 was perhaps the most important historic event of all.

In the middle of the 20th century, the eyes of the world turned here, to Flushing Meadows, the first home of the United Nations.

That body was forged in the fading embers of the Second World War -- a cataclysm that raised nearly as many questions as it answered, and none more significant than the fate suffered by the Jewish people.

The horrors of the Holocaust reminded the world that the safety and freedom of the Jewish people could not be secured without an independent Jewish state -- sovereign, free, and capable of defending itself, by itself.

So in May 1947, less than two years after its inception, the United Nations formed the Special Commission on Palestine to propose paths forward for that region.

And on November 29, 1947 -- 70 years ago tomorrow -- the General Assembly gathered in this great hall and passed Resolution 181, calling for creation of the Jewish State of Israel. (Applause.)

Now to be clear: Israel needed no resolution to exist, for Israel’s right to exist is self-evident and timeless.

Nor did that resolution create the State of Israel. For Israel was born of the sweat and the sacrifice of the Jewish pioneers who risked everything to reclaim their beloved lands, with -- in those well remembered words -- “with a plow in one hand and a rifle in another.”

They turned the desert into a garden, scarcity into plenty, and an age-old dream into a reality. And their striving and their sacrifice laid the foundation for what took place in this hall 70 years ago.

And only six months later, the Jewish State of Israel was born -- answering the ancient question first asked by the prophet Isaiah: “Can a country be born in one day, can a nation be born in a moment?”  
  
It happened when on May 14, 1948, Israel declared “the natural right of Jewish people to be the masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state.” (Applause.)

While Israel was built by human hands, it’s impossible not to see the hand of heaven leading its people, writing their history in the restoration of this ancient people to their land of their birth.

In fact, the God of Abraham told His people, “Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there I will gather you and bring you back to the land which your fathers possessed.”

It was an ancient promise cherished by Americans since before our nation’s founding, and it was a promise the Jewish people clung to through all the ages, through a 2,000-year exile, the longest of any people, anywhere. And they were rewarded for their faith.

As President Trump has said, “Israel is a testament to the unbreakable spirit of the Jewish people.” (Applause.)

The United States of America was proud to support Resolution 181. We were proud to be the first nation in the world to recognize Israel’s independence soon after. And we were proud to stand by Israel and the Jewish people ever since.

And under President Donald Trump, let me assure you of this, if the world knows nothing else, the world will know this: America stands with Israel. (Applause.)

America stands with Israel because her cause is our cause, her values are our values, and her fight is our fight. We stand with Israel because we believe in right over wrong, good over evil, freedom over tyranny.

We stand with Israel because the bond between our nations was knit before either one of them came to be.

President Trump dedicated our administration to strengthen that bond, to deepen the friendship between our nations. And he’s demonstrated our unwavering commitment recently in his visit to Israel in May of this year.

For my part, I will reiterate the President’s message and reaffirm our historic relationship when my family and I travel to Israel next month. (Applause.)

On my visit, it will be my great honor to address the members of the Knesset, to walk on the hallowed ground of that holy city that King David built more than 3,000 years ago, and to pay our respects and breathe a prayer at Yad Vashem.

In this season of reverence and grace, for millions around the globe, I’ll also bring a message of respect and gratitude to the Jewish people for their strength of will, their strength of character, and for all that they have given humanity over the millennia.

But I’ll also bring a message of resolve and commitment, to draw the United States and Israel even closer together, and to stand together in defense of all that we hold dear.

President Trump has already taken concrete steps to deepen the ties between our two nations. And nowhere is that more evident than in the very body whose vote we commemorate today, the United Nations.

More than 50 years ago, President John F. Kennedy warned that the United Nations must never be allowed to become, in his words, a “forum for invective.” But today, sadly, with regard to Israel, too often it's become exactly that -- a forum for invective in the form of anti-Semitism and hatred.

But with the leadership of our President and the efforts of our Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, the days of Israel-bashing at the United Nations are over. (Applause.)

Within the Human Rights Council and across the United Nations, Ambassador Haley has advanced reforms to put an end to the blatant bias and discrimination that was too often the reality in the recent past at the U.N.

President Trump has withdrawn the United States from one of the U.N.’s most anti-Israel bodies -- UNESCO. (Applause.)

And beyond the walls of the United Nations, our President is working tirelessly to strengthen the historic friendship between the United States and Israel. I'm pleased to report today that America's support for Israel's security is at a record level today. (Applause.)

And while, for the past 20 years, Congress and successive administrations have expressed a willingness to move our embassy, as we speak, President Donald Trump is actively considering when and how to move the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. (Applause.)

And as the President has made clear, our administration is also committed to finally bringing peace to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As President Trump has said, in his words, “We want Israel to have peace.” And in the recent months, we've made valuable progress toward achieving that noble goal.

And while compromise will be necessary, you can be assured President Donald Trump will never compromise the safety and security of the Jewish State of Israel. (Applause.)

The President has made clear that under this administration, America once again stands with our allies and stands up to our enemies. And our two nations stand together to confront any who dare to threaten us, most especially the menace of radical Islamic terror.

It does not matter what name it takes -- Hezbollah, Hamas, al Qaeda, or any other -- you can be assured that we will defeat the forces of terror so they can no longer threaten our people, our allies, or our way of life. (Applause.)

And under President Trump, America and Israel once again stand together in the face of the leading state sponsor of terrorism. President Trump has put Iran on notice.

Just last month, the President laid out a new strategy to oppose Iranian efforts to destabilize the region and jeopardize Israel’s security.

As he has said, in his words, “The longer we ignore the threat, the more dangerous that threat becomes.” That's why President Trump announced that we will not certify the Iran nuclear deal, and we will no longer tolerate Tehran’s support for terrorism across the region and across the wider world. (Applause.)

As we speak, our administration is working closely with leaders in Congress to craft legislation that will overcome the Iran nuclear deal’s most glaring failures. And while this process is still underway, today I can assure you, under President Trump, the United States of America will not allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. This is our solemn promise to you, to Israel, and to the world. (Applause.)

History attests that enmity toward the Jewish people often turns from evil thought to evil action. And over the years, there has hardly been a day when the people of Israel have lived without war, or the fear of war, or the grim reality of terror.

But no matter the challenges they face, or the slanders they endure, the Jewish people always persevere. For even in the darkness, the light of their faith, their strength, and their hope shines bright.

It was faith that led them to return to their ancient homeland. It was hope that spurred them to build a state to call their own. It was love -- love for each other and a love for freedom -- that has inspired the people of Israel to greatness since the hour of their birth.

Today we celebrate and we marvel at all that the people of Israel have accomplished. We remember those who sacrificed so much for Israel’s existence and those brave men and women who stand sentry to this very day. We praise their resolve and their courage in this time of widening challenges and unknowable threats.

And while today we celebrate the vote that took place in the United Nations 70 years ago tomorrow, every day we celebrate the strength and vitality of the Jewish people, and the Jewish State of Israel.

Israel is an eternal testament to the unwavering fortitude of her people, to the unfathomable power of human freedom, and to the unending grace of God. And so today, we still trust in that promise. A promise in words heard millennia ago that I believe are true for her people and true for our people today as much as they were when they were first recorded, “For I know the plans I have for you,” He spoke, “plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope, and a future.”

70 years ago, in this very hall, we recognized that the future of the Jewish people lay in a state they could call their own. And today with faith in that future and in that hope, we recommit ourselves to stand with Israel to pursue a brighter future for both our peoples, our nations, and for the world.

And with the friendship and courage of our citizens, with the commitment of our leaders, and with the guidance of Providence, I say with confidence, the United States and Israel will meet that bright future together. (Applause.)

Thank you. May God continue to bless and protect the Jewish State of Israel and all her people and may God continue to bless the United States of America.