**Remarks at the Israeli-American Council Conference**

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Thank you, very much. You all always overwhelm me with your kindness. Thank you very, very much.

It’s great to be here. And it’s great to celebrate the Israeli-American community. It’s great to celebrate the incredibly strong ties between America and Israel.

I want to thank Sheldon and Miriam Adelson for all they do for America. I want to thank them for all they do for America, for Israel, and for the American-Israeli relationship. Their good works are invaluable. Thank you.

You know, in my current job, I’m reminded of the ties between America and Israel almost every day. This past week at the UN, we had the annual vote that Cuba sponsors. It’s an annual attack against the United States embargo on Cuba. The whole world sides with Cuba. Well, almost the whole world.

The vote this year was 191 to 2. Only Israel stood with America against the brutal regime in Cuba.

I want to thank Israel’s UN Ambassador Danny Danon for that vote. You know what they say – quality is more important than quantity.

That’s sort of how things go at the UN. But I’ll come back to that in a minute.

As you may know, I am the daughter of Indian immigrants. When I speak to Jewish-American audiences I often talk about the similarities between the Indian-American community and the Jewish-American community.

We’re both family oriented. We both have a strong work ethic. We’re both really stubborn. And neither of us backs down from a fight.

In June, I had the great pleasure of visiting Israel for the first time. It was truly a bucket list experience. The reception I received was incredibly heartwarming.

Literally from the most religious community in the Old City to the gay pride parade in Tel Aviv, the people were so happy to see us, and they were so kind.

I went to Israel to see first-hand the country the United Nations spends half its time on.

Unfortunately, I’m not kidding. It’s ridiculous. It seems like the rough breakdown at the UN is half the time on Israel, and half the time on the other 192 countries.

When I was in Israel I met with many leading officials, including the Prime Minister. I walked inside the terror tunnels coming from Gaza. I visited the Golan Heights and saw the Hezbollah positions in south Lebanon.

One of the most memorable things we did was take a tour of the country by helicopter with one of the top IDF Generals. It was just eye-opening to see how small the country is, and how vulnerable the geography makes it.

We met wonderful, talented, peaceful people – people who defy the caricature of Israel painted at the UN.

And that’s what I’d like to say a few words about tonight: The United Nations, how Israel has been treated there, and what we’re trying to do about it.

It’s no secret that the UN is a hostile place for Israel. But what I saw just before I became the U.S. Ambassador was a shameful period in which the United States became a part of that hostility.

It was last December, almost exactly a month before my confirmation, when the United States stood by and allowed – some would say encouraged – the Security Council to pass Resolution 2334.

Resolution 2334 branded Israel as a violator of international law. It was a cowardly act; and a real low point for America at the UN.

To me, Resolution 2334 wasn’t about the settlements issue. The United States and Israel have long had our differences on the settlements. And that’s ok. Friends can have disagreements and still be friends.

What happened with 2334 was a betrayal of our friend in the very forum that has been one of its cruelest and most hostile foes. America was far from being a friend to Israel on that day.

I was still governor of South Carolina, but I came away from the passage of Resolution 2334 certain of one thing: As long as I was U.S. Ambassador, such an act of betrayal would never happen again.

From time to time, the general public gets a taste of what the UN is like from shameful acts like the passage of 2334. But I have to tell you, most people really have no idea how ridiculous it is, because they don’t experience it themselves.

I experienced it first-hand at one of my first UN Security Council meetings in February. The situation in the Middle East looked like this: Bashar Assad was in the middle of his bloody war against his own people; ISIS controlled large swaths of Iraq; Hezbollah was building an arsenal of war in Lebanon; Iran was testing ballistic missiles.

But in its monthly meeting on the Middle East, the Security Council didn’t talk about any of that. Instead, it spent the overwhelming majority of its time talking about Israel – and not in a very nice way.

I came out of that meeting ashamed of the UN. I vowed then and there that the days of standing by passively while Israel is bashed at the United Nations were over.

And just as soon as I said that, the UN began to test our resolve.

First, the Secretary-General announced that he was appointing a former Palestinian prime minister to a high position in the UN system.

While we had no particular problem with that individual, I reminded the Secretary-General that neither the U.S. nor the UN recognizes a Palestinian state.

I said that the U.S. did not support the signal sent by the nomination, especially when it has been so hard to get Israelis chosen for UN positions. The nomination was pulled.

Next, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia produced a report calling Israel an apartheid state.

So we went to the Secretary-General again and asked him to withdraw the report. To his credit, he did. As an added bonus, the author of the report resigned the next day.

These were tests of our determination to change the culture at the UN – tests I’m proud to say we passed.

A much more serious threat – and I know it’s one that you focus on a lot – comes from Iran.

As the President has recently pointed out, the Iran nuclear deal is very, very flawed.

One of the biggest problems with it is how the international community gets played by Iran. The deal is designed to be too big to fail. It’s designed to keep critics of the regime’s behavior quiet so as not to threaten the deal.

Iran is engaged in all kinds of bad behavior prohibited by UN Security Council resolutions – testing ballistic missiles, arming rebels in Yemen, supporting Assad’s brutality in Syria, and building up Hezbollah’s war machine in Lebanon.

For too long, Iran has known that as long as it stays in technical compliance with the nuclear agreement, the Security Council and the world won’t do anything about its other lawless behavior.

That’s no way for us to operate.

The President’s action has put the Iran deal back in play. It has opened a lot of eyes to the dangerous Iranian conduct the world has overlooked to preserve a deeply flawed deal.

We are now pushing the world to confront the totality of the threat posed by the Iranian regime.

Not just how many centrifuges it has, but how many terrorists it supports, and how many missiles it tests. It is beyond time that we did this.

Congress now has the opportunity to bring the debate about the Iran nuclear deal out from the fantasy world created by the Obama echo chamber, and into the real world where it belongs.

This is a chance, not to abandon the deal – not yet – but to improve it. I sincerely hope Congress takes this opportunity.

So it’s a new day at the UN. Slowly, but surely, we are chipping away at the anti-Israel culture.

As you probably saw, about three weeks ago the United States withdrew from the UN’s Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, better known as UNESCO.

For the United States, it was a good call, and honestly, after we’d considered UNESCO’s pattern of extremely political and one-sided decisions, it was an easy call.

Another of the most viciously anti-Israel parts of the UN is the so-called Human Rights Council. It is notorious for singling out Israel for condemnation, while it welcomes some of the world’s worst human rights violators as members.

Right now, we’re dealing with the after-effects of a Human Rights Council resolution that called for the creation of a database of companies operating in Israeli settlements.

We need to be clear: This is a BDS blacklist, plain and simple. The United States has been opposed to this list from the very start. We have not and will not contribute any information to its creation.

We are working closely with the High Commissioner to try and ensure the list is not made public. It goes well beyond the mandate of what the Human Rights Council or any UN office should be doing. We will need to work to defeat this at all levels of government.

We’ve also developed a reform agenda that will address the more systemic issues within the Human Rights Council.

Earlier this month, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was elected to the Council. This country uses rape as a weapon of war and recruits children as young as seven as soldiers.

Our reforms will help keep human rights abusers like Congo, South Sudan, Venezuela, and Cuba off the Human Rights Council.

Our reforms would also put an end to the notorious Agenda Item Seven, which is the part of the Council that’s devoted exclusively to bashing Israel.

We’ve made clear that the Human Rights Council will either adopt these reforms or the United States will leave and fight for human rights in other forums.

We don’t want to walk away, but we’re ready to if these changes are not made. We only want to be part of the Human Rights Council if it is true to its name.

Closer to Israel, last month we changed the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon to do a better job policing the border with Israel.

Hezbollah has been amassing weapons and fighters on that border with impunity – right under the nose of the UN peacekeeping force that is supposed to stop them. It was a joke, and we made it clear it couldn’t continue. So we changed it.

All in all, I have to say I am cautiously optimistic about the changes occurring in the culture at the UN. The Israel bashing hasn’t disappeared by any means.

But it is less and less. And where it persists, the United States has used its leverage to force change.

I want to go back to the UNESCO decision for a second to make a bigger point. The same day we announced our withdrawal from UNESCO, Israel announced it would also withdraw.

At first glance, it would seem like this should have been an even easier call for Israel than it was for America. Israel has long been UNESCO’s punching bag.

Recently, UNESCO has graduated from simple anti-Israel bias to attempting to erase the history of the Jewish people. Earlier this year it declared Israel’s Tomb of the Patriarchs a Palestinian heritage site.

But when you think about it, for Israel, deciding to withdraw from UNESCO is really a more complicated call. Because when you face almost constant harassment and hostility, where do you draw the line?

The same reasoning that led Israel to withdraw from UNESCO could be applied to just about every UN organization, including the General Assembly.

To its credit, Israel has stayed committed to the United Nations. This small nation shows the collected nations of the world more deference and respect than they deserve.

And the reason is because Israel knows it needs to stay and fight for its interests – and for its survival.

And it needs to stay and fight for the principles of democracy, tolerance, and openness that it alone upholds in the Middle East.

I’m glad Israel remains committed to what can seem like a very lonely fight. I’m here to let the world know that Israel is not alone.

Israel is not alone; it has a steadfast friend and ally in this struggle. As long as I am at my post, the United States of America will never again desert our friend in its hour of need.

Thank you and God bless you.