



SHIMON PERES

President of the State of Israel

Dear Friends,

Once again we gather in Jerusalem, for the fifth time, to think together about tomorrow.

This passing year, since we last convened, represents an indication of the extent to which our era is typified by tremendous changes that manifested themselves at a dizzying pace. It was a year that reflected the intensity of the crises and complexity of the challenges: from the global economic crisis, which has still not been removed from our agenda, through to the turmoil and bloodshed that has befallen the region since the outbreak of the "Arab Spring", to Iran's ongoing efforts to arm itself with nuclear weapons.

Our journey to a better tomorrow is lined with bumps and difficult obstacles that have the power to deter and to instill paralyzing despair. This is the hour of trial, and it is also the time when individuals make a difference and turn crisis into opportunity. History has shown that it is possible. Our tomorrow is ready to be shaped, it responds to our decisions, it is accessible to our dreams, and it is a magnet for our creativity. Tomorrow presents us with blank pages that invite us to write on them the chronicle of the future.

I have learned over my long years that to dream is to be practical. I have seen many wonderful dreams become reality. I have learned that the most agonizing crises are enfolded within riveting opportunities. These opportunities are elusive, and are ready to reveal themselves only to those that have a loving heart and an optimistic spirit. The human resource is undoubtedly the determining factor. I now know that the moments preceding great victories are the ones that are the most difficult and desperate. There is no cause to lose hope, for a better tomorrow is indeed within our reach.

We aspire to a better tomorrow for Israel, the Jewish people and the entire world. Hence our thinking about tomorrow is not passive. This thinking calls for imagination, vision and a considerable amount of defiance. Our thinking should be bold, of the kind that yearns to shape the future.

The prophets of Israel have been an inspiration for our people and have taught us to rebel against evil and refrain from coming to terms with injustice. To the Jewish people they also bequeathed restlessness, making us practically unable to be satisfied. Almost always discontented with the way things are. With an urge to generate change, strive for a better and more just future – for us, for our neighbors and all of mankind.

This Conference is being attended by leaders from different parts of the world and from a wide range of fields of activity: diplomacy, science, economics, culture, art, religion, and philosophy, to name but a few. While these leaders differ one from the other, they still have a common denominator – their determination to influence the global, Israeli, and Jewish tomorrow. They possess a burning desire to break away from the familiar and the courage to create something new. For them, the essence of the human being lies in his very effort to shape the future.

I am grateful for your participation and for your willingness to address our collective tomorrow together.

Shimon Peres
President of Israel