



Mr. Israel Maimon

Chair, Israeli Presidential Conference Steering Committee

Honored guests,

Welcome to the fifth Israeli Presidential Conference, 2013.

In the past year since the last conference, we have seen the Middle East continuing to erupt around us. In addition to the dramatic changes in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, we are now witnessing the bloody civil war raging in Syria, a growing protest in Turkey and the surprising results in the Iranian elections.

We are witness to significant differences in the approach of the major powers to these events. Almost every day, it seems, things are taking place – right here in our neighborhood – whose potential impact on our lives here in Israel and on the world order cannot be over-stated.

And in the midst of all this, the State of Israel has remained stable. Not long ago, we held elections and a new government was formed. We take this for granted, and so it should be.

Yet, even in these uncertain times, the challenge is still to try and influence our tomorrow – and to make it a better tomorrow. During the fifth Israeli Presidential Conference, we will focus our gaze and, through our discussions, concentrate on the human factor, on humankind, which has the potential to imagine, to invent, to make decisions and to lead us in every field of endeavor.

On the opening evening of the Conference, we will turn our eyes towards a man who has dedicated his entire life to public service so as to build a better future for Israel, for the Jewish people and for the entire world as we will celebrate the 90th birthday of the President of the State of Israel, H.E. Mr. Shimon Peres. Through the prism of his life, we will look at the history of the State of Israel, from before it was established, through the main events in the life of the State, to the present day in which we are sowing the seeds of tomorrow.

Marking the President's birthday at the Conference was an extraordinary factor in attracting some 90 speakers from overseas to participate in the Conference, in addition to another 90 from Israel – all of them the finest minds in their fields. At this Conference we will also reach a record number of overseas participants – 2,800. The contribution that all the participants make to the Israeli economy, to tourism and to promoting investment and research is proven. I am sure that, when they return to their home countries, each and every one of these Conference participants will be a superb ambassador for the State of Israel.

The President's Conference is made possible thanks to the kindheartedness and generosity of our wonderful donors – almost all of who are active in and contributors to other important causes in the areas of research and culture in Israel and throughout the Jewish world – donors who regard the Conference as an incredible opportunity to present the beautiful face of the State of Israel, to arouse debate and to offer solutions so as to create a better future for our children. We extend our heartfelt thanks to these Conference donors.

A big thanks, too, to my fabulous colleagues on the Presidential Conference Steering Committee. Since the moment the last Conference closed, the members of the Committee have labored day and night to put together a Conference that is rich in content and produced at the highest level. To you, I offer my deepest thanks and a big "well done"! Also deserving of special recognition and praise are those entrusted with production and communications who will with us throughout and whose contribution to the Conference's success is invaluable.

I wish all of us a productive and successful Conference.

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The Israeli President's Conference, 2013