



Press Release

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Français

MUCH OF UN MISSION DIRECT RESPONSE TO HORRORS OF NAZISM, HOLOCAUST,
SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL, IN REMARKS AT JERUSALEM DINNER

Following are UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's remarks at a dinner hosted by Moshe Katsav, President of Israel, in Jerusalem, 15 March:

It is a great pleasure to be here, and I would like to express my gratitude to the Government and people of Israel for the warm welcome they have extended to all of us.

I would especially like to thank them for understanding how important it was for the United Nations to be represented at today's important moving event at Yad Vashem.

Our Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Genocide Convention – indeed, much of the UN's mission itself – came as a direct response to the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust. The United Nations must never forget that. There can be no bystanders or silence in the struggle against racism and discrimination. All of us have an obligation to be vigilant. We must counter those who spread lies and stereotypes. We need to do whatever we can to help the victims.

Today's inauguration of Yad Vashem is especially well-timed.

It comes at a moment of renewed hope for progress in the search for peace in the Middle East. This was clear in the meetings I have had during my visit. I am sure I speak for the entire international community in saying that we will do whatever we can to help Israelis and Palestinians realize their long-held dream of peace and security – in other words, of living a normal life, like others in other countries.

Today's ceremony also occurs as Israel and the United Nations continue to build a new relationship.

Last January, the General Assembly held a special session to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of death camps. This was unprecedented.

At long last, too, Israel has become a member of the Western European and Others Group in the General Assembly in New York. This, too, was a welcome sign of normalization. I will do whatever I can to encourage corresponding groups in Geneva and Vienna to follow suit. We need to correct a long-standing anomaly that kept Israel from participating fully and equally in the work of the Organization.

There is a sense that Israel and the United Nations have rediscovered each other. We have a shared history. We have important work to do today. More and more, I hope, Israelis and Jews will come to feel that the United Nations is their home, as much as it is that of any other people or nation.

Let me close by thanking Yad Vashem for everything it is doing to educate the world about the Holocaust. You are keeping memory alive for future generations. Let us remember, above all, our children and grandchildren. We must bequeath to them a world more firmly on the path toward tolerance and respect for human dignity.

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