

U.S.-ISRAEL JOINT STATEMENT ON STRATEGIC COOPERATION (30 April 1996)

<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook10/Pages/Israel-US%20Joint%20Statement.aspx>

President Clinton and Prime Minister Peres have concluded two days of intensive discussions on a broad range of issues relating to the U.S.-Israel relationship. Those discussions reflect the deep, longstanding and unique bonds of friendship which have characterized the U.S.-Israel relationship and the legacy of shared values, common interests, and mutual respect for democracy that have made this close and special relationship endure.

The president and prime minister reviewed the extent of the U.S.-Israel relationship in all its dimensions. They agreed that this cooperation in security, economic, and diplomatic areas is grounded in institutions that are functioning extremely effectively to the benefit of both countries. At the same time, they agreed that, in view of continuing threats to regional peace and stability, and in particular the dangers posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and advanced military technologies, U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation will grow in importance. To this end, the president and the prime minister agreed that a steering committee headed by the U.S. secretary of state and the Israeli minister of foreign affairs would be established to explore means of enhancing and, where appropriate, formalizing, that cooperation. Two working groups will report to the steering committee. The first, dealing with security and defense matters, will consider all options including the possibility of more formal security accords, for how best to meet common threats in the years to come. It will also identify ways to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. aid to Israel. The second will deal with other policy matters relating to U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation.

The two leaders affirmed that the strategic partnership between the two countries will continue to be based on two key principles: first, the United States' unshakable commitment to Israel's security and its determination to minimize the risks and costs Israel confronts as it pursues peace; and second, the U.S.-Israel mutual commitment to a comprehensive peace and their determination to move toward that goal. With respect to Israel's security, the president specifically reaffirmed the United States commitment to maintain Israel's qualitative edge and to preserve and to strengthen Israel's capability to deter and defend itself, by itself, against any adversary or likely combination of adversaries.

The president and prime minister took great pride in signing the U.S.-Israel Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Accord. This agreement sets out practical measures enabling their two countries to make the best possible use of expertise, resources, and capabilities in the war against terror. A Joint Counter-Terrorism Group has been established to monitor and oversee the implementation of the agreement. Israel and the United States also agreed to seek to coordinate their efforts with the international effort against terror launched at Sharm al-Sheikh on March 13, 1996.

The president and the prime minister also took note of the joint statement on theater missile defense cooperation signed by the prime minister and Secretary of Defense Perry on April 28. The United States and Israel recognize the defense of Israel will be made more effective by undertaking necessary steps to ensure that Israel's theater missile defenses are supported by related United States capabilities. The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the positive results to date of the ongoing bilateral dialogue on issues relating to the transfer of equipment and technology to third countries.

With respect to their determination to achieve a comprehensive peace, the two leaders agreed on the importance of implementation of agreements reached and the need to expand the orbit of Arab-Israeli peacemaking with a view toward achieving normal, peaceful relations between Israel and all its Arab neighbors. They welcomed the decision by the Palestinian National Council to cancel all the provisions of the Palestinian National Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist or are otherwise inconsistent with the September 1993 exchange of letters between Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat. This action is an important demonstration by the Palestinians of their commitment to honor the terms of the 1993 Oslo Accords.

The president and prime minister also expressed satisfaction with the improved understanding reached last week on southern Lebanon as a result of Secretary of State Christopher's negotiating efforts and after discussions with the governments of Israel and Lebanon and in consultation with Syria. They noted the importance of prompt activation of the monitoring committee and consultative group established by the understanding.

Finally, the president and the prime minister agreed on the need to end the Arab boycott and to eliminate discrimination against Israel in all international organizations, including the United Nations.