

## Ambassador Yuval Rotem Address on the occasion of Yom Hatz'maut 2009

Today represents the birth of a state, the strength of a nation, and the power of hope.



Today, millions of Jews around the world will once again celebrate 61 years of the Independence of the State of Israel.

Yesterday was Yom Hazikaron, and as every other year, we pause to remember that the joy of celebrating our independence comes with a heavy price. It is a strange anomaly, that we should temper our happiness with sorrow, our successes with our failures, our hope with our despair. It is in this bittersweet spirit that we remember the fallen; the people who gave their lives for the State of Israel and to see the dream of 2000 years come to fruition, to prosper and to continue on in peace and success.

However, it is *this* dream and its manifestation as a thriving Jewish democracy that we celebrate today. We have come a long way from our humble beginnings, and faced untold adversities to make our vision a reality. And yet, we also recognize we have a long way still to go. We are not perfect but we are constantly striving, never faltering in our unceasing hopes for a peaceful, secure future, yet to be realised.

Tonight I will not brief you on the threats that face Israel. The challenges are known - a nuclear Iran, Islamic radicalism, the economic global crisis. In this hour, there is no need to explain the magnitude of the threat, but to realize the empowerment of hope.

I have a great faith. I have a great hope. I have a strong belief in the enormous strength of Israeli society. I have a great faith in the Israeli economy. I have a great faith in Israeli science that enriches the world with discoveries. I have a great faith in our rich and diverse culture. I have a great faith that Israel as a democratic country with her outstanding history and unique characteristic traits has enough ability to overcome any adversary who wishes her harm.

This year's celebrations are made all the more special, because we also mark the 100th birthday of the city of Tel Aviv.

Forged out of the coastal sand dunes, Tel Aviv grew to become a bustling centre of commerce, technology, arts and culture. The entrepreneurial spirit, upon which the Tel Aviv was founded, has manifested itself in the vibrancy, enlightenment and potential of this 24-hour city.

Tel Aviv has long been the voice of modernity and a picture of the future of Israel, and yet, she never forgets her ties to her past. From the ancient port city of Jaffa to the first Jewish neighbourhood of Neve Tzedek, Tel Aviv's beauty lies in her contrast of the ancient and modern, and the harmony that it has created.

Tel Aviv stands as a pillar of pluralism that is unique; a genuine melting pot religions, cultures and lifestyles. Where old men drink coffee and play backgammon on street corners, and young people strut along the promenade, where Friday evening is welcomed by the sound of drums on the beach and the Muezzins call to prayer, and where every day is fresh, exciting, grasped with both hands.

Life in Tel Aviv represents the liberalism of a new Israel, a place unrestricted by self-definition, affiliation or recreation. It is a city constantly reinvented, and these layers of personality are what make Tel Aviv such a distinctive and relevant city, worthy of celebrating.

On such a day as this we are also reminded of the support of Jewish communities around the world, without which we are incomplete as a nation. Your support here in Australia,

through your hard work and dedication, gives us the means to flourish and reassurance when we need it most.

Your amity is an immeasurable source of promise for Israel. On behalf of my country, I offer my deepest gratitude.

May the coming years celebrations see Israel grow and prosper in peace and security.