

WJC PRESIDENT RONALD S. LAUDER
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Thank you, and good morning.

My friends, colleagues, my fellow Jews. I wish you could see what I see. I look across this room and I see such amazing diversity. There are Jews here from Europe and Australia, Russia and South America, France, England, and Africa. For the first time in our history, we even have a delegate here from Bahrain! We come from many different places. Our communities all have their own unique stories. We don't all look alike, we speak different languages, but in the end, we are one people and we take care of each other.

Let me repeat this because these are the most important words anyone will say over the next 2 days: We are one people, and we take care of each other!

After the Torah, that is our greatest strength. We are one people.

Today, I stand before you, members of the most creative, the most committed, the most far-reaching Jewish organization in the world. I have done many things in my life, but there is no accomplishment, no title, no honor that I am more proud of, than being president of the World Jewish Congress! I have led you for ten years, and in those ten years we've seen great change, we have gone from a quiet organization with a famous name, to the most important Jewish organization on the planet.

This happened because of our incredible team David de Rothschild, Chella Safra, Robert Singer, Maram Stern and the outstanding professionals that run the World Jewish Congress, and it could not have happened without the help of every one of you in this room. That's why today, Presidents, Prime Ministers, even Popes, open their doors for the World Jewish Congress. In ten years, I have visited over 40 countries on five continents and I tell every world leader the same thing: protect the Jews in your country, because we are watching! Work with us to make sure they are safe and free! And do not side with those that would hurt them! Why do we do this? Because we are one people, and we take care of each other.

After 10 years, and before another term begins, let's look at where we are, and where we are going.

I want to begin with the age-old hatred of Jews. This past October the World Jewish Congress commissioned the first-ever survey of the Jewish people. We polled Jews in France and the UK, Russia, America, Argentina and Israel. We covered 90% of all Jews worldwide. This is what we found out:

The number-one concern for Jews today was the increase in anti-Semitism.

They are also concerned about the rise of radical Islam.

While it's true that anti-Semitism is up... the fact is: we really don't face the same anti-Semitism today that our fathers and grandfathers faced. Today, Jews are not forced into ghettos. Jewish doctors and lawyers are not shut out of jobs. All professions, all colleges, all government offices are open to us. We can live where we want, go where we want, and do whatever we want. But one thing has never changed. Anti-Semites have always wanted to destroy the world's only Jewish state. Since 1948, our enemies could not destroy us militarily, and they tried.

They could not destroy us economically, and they tried. So now they are trying to destroy us politically. They tried to turn Israel into the pariah state, the apartheid state, the evil state. With lie, after lie, after lie. Let me make this perfectly clear: when you hear someone say that they are not anti-Semitic, only anti-Israel, stand up and tell them that is a lie. It's a lie because, when you hold the only Jewish state to a different standard than every other nation, when you lie about its present and its past, and when you actively seek its destruction, Guess what? That doesn't make you an anti-Zionist, it makes you an anti-Semite. Who do they think lives in Israel? Martians?

They use the same old lies we have heard for generations and here is the worst part, just like before, these lies go unchallenged by too many people who should know better. Half-a-century ago, the great civil rights leader, Martin Luther King saw this coming. King said - and I quote: "when people criticize Zionists they mean Jews, and you are talking anti-Semitism", Martin Luther King warned back in the 1960s that anti-Semitism would soon be disguised as anti-Zionism - and he was right.

Today, we see this on college campuses where professors lie about Israel. We see it in the BDS movement that spreads lie after lie about Israel. We see it in the very biased media from Al Jazeera to the BBC. We even see it in the United Nations, a world body that should be dedicated to peace, a world organization that was built after World War II on the broken bones of the Jewish people. A world organization that has been the center of worldwide anti-Semitism.

So, yes, anti-Semitism has changed, but so has the World Jewish Congress. We are not that sleepy organization that only reacted to crisis after crisis, we are now pro-actively working day and night to stop the problem before it becomes a crisis. Why? Because we are one people.

Let me tell you how we are doing this, when I travel around the world, what is the one issue on everyone's mind? It's security. The terror that began in the Middle East over 50 years ago, has now spread across the globe. Once, terror attacks were occasional. Today, they happen almost every single day. We wake up every morning and hear about a suicide bombing, cars running over people, or people killed in synagogues and churches. Women, children, old people mothers with infants are the targets. The media calls the people who carry out these crimes "militants", sometimes they call them "terrorists", I call them monsters! and the World Jewish Congress will no longer allow these monsters to set the agenda.

To fight this we have opened up a new security department with experts that travel around the world. Working with local Jewish communities large and small to determine their security needs. We have already been to Bulgaria, Bosnia, Greece and Kazakhstan, Paraguay, Uruguay, Spain

and Serbia. We've been to France and Macedonia. We work with the local police and government officials. We study the synagogues and schools - everywhere Jews live and work we do our best to protect them.

We are also working with an Israeli company providing an app that will allow instant contact with police whenever a Jew is threatened. We know attacks will come, and we want everyone to be ready when they do. Why do we do this? Because we are one people.

Since you are here in New York, I must say more about an organization that has been hijacked by anti-Semites for far too long. Just 20 blocks from here, the United Nations. For the last 10 years, Ban Ki Moon led the United Nations in its dishonest hatred of Israel.

Here are some of the most outrageous figures: last year, The UN passed only one resolution condemning Iran, one resolution against North Korea, one resolution against Crimea, three resolutions against Syria and 20 --- twenty resolutions!!! against Israel. Does that sound even remotely fair? The United Nations knew that Hamas had rockets in schools, hospitals and mosques and it still passed the outrageous Goldstone report accusing Israel of crimes against humanity. The United Nations knew the historic connection of the Jewish people to our holiest site - the temple mount - and UNESCO still passed a resolution that tied the temple mount only to Islam. The UN's commission on the status of women condemned only Israel as the sole violator of women's rights in the entire world. That's just ludicrous. At the UN truth doesn't matter. Facts don't matter. Common sense doesn't matter.

And to top it off last year, Ban Ki Moon justified Palestinian terrorism by saying - and I quote - "it is human nature to react to occupation." Is it human nature to run people over with cars? Is it human nature to stab innocent people in the streets? Is it human nature to strap explosives on yourself and blow up pizza parlors filled with teenagers? No! That is not human nature. That's just sick.

But at the end of last year, something wonderful happened. It's really quite unbelievable. First, Ban Ki-Moon left his post, and he was replaced by Antonio Guterres, who spoke to you last night. What a difference. I have met with the new secretary general and he has promised me that he will do everything in his power to stop the UN's anti-Israel bias. To prove his commitment, secretary general Guterres had a vicious anti-Israel report quickly taken off the UN website and he made it clear that the authors of that report - Richard Falk and Rima Khalaf - were no longer welcomed in the UN.

Something else happened regarding the UN and this is very important. There was an election here in the US last November and Donald Trump, who spoke to us all last night, was elected president. And I will tell you this, president Trump will never abstain from any anti-Israel resolutions in the UN security council. What we saw last December with UN resolution 2334 was a travesty. I don't care where your politics lie, because when resident Trump named Nikki Haley to be the new US ambassador to the UN everything changed overnight. In her very first press conference, Ambassador Haley made it clear that the US would no longer tolerate any anti-Israel bias. I met with Ambassador Haley, and you will meet her tomorrow. This woman is just outstanding.

I want to say one more thing about president trump I've known him personally for over 50 years. Since he's become president, I have met with him several times. And I will tell you that we now have the most pro-Israel president ever in the White House. This president admires Israel, he admires the Jewish people, and he admires the World Jewish Congress. Yes we are one people. We will always help each other, and so will he.

Now, I want to tell you about 3 new and very important departments that we are starting at the World Jewish Congress.

First, let's talk about hasborah. There is absolutely no reason that Jews, of all people, should be losing this part of the political war. Jews invented public relations and some of the greatest innovations in social media have come out of Israel. But for far too long we have let our enemies define us, and their narrative is the one that the world hears. How will we change this? First, the World Jewish Congress is working with Israel's largest media information company – Vigo – to map out the sources and types of all anti-Semitism that pollute the internet and media. We now know where these messages come from and we are working with internet companies to shut them down. We want all hate speech towards all people removed from the internet. The internet Is a wonderful thing that connects the entire world and it should never be a place where bigots can spew their hate.

There's a second part to this. We are creating a media division at the World Jewish Congress that will work with PR groups around the world, to fight the anti-Semitic messages and present a more honest and positive image of Israel and the Jewish people.

Our second front will use the legal tools that will defeat the BDS movement. We are creating a legal office with the most brilliant Jewish lawyers in the world. And we are working with governments to pass legislation that will outlaw this kind of discrimination against Israel. So far, 19 states across the US have passed anti-BDS legislation. The US federal government is working on this through its trade laws. And we are working with the governments of Spain, Canada, France and the UK to do the same. On this front I am happy to tell you that the tide is turning and we are finally winning.

My third initiative, involves education, Jewish education. We cannot look at our future without looking at the education of our young people. I myself have opened 25 Jewish schools throughout eastern and central Europe. They are the best schools with the best teachers and, in many ways, they have defined the Jewish communities in their countries. We have succeeded in places where Jewish education was denied for over 60 years, but unless we educate our children everywhere and help them understand the reasons to be Jewish and stay Jewish, then everything I have said up until now is completely irrelevant.

If our children and grandchildren walk away from their religion and culture, there is no Jewish future, but if they are educated, if they have a sense of pride in being Jewish, if they see the beauty in this religion, then there is less chance for inter-marriage and a greater possibility for more Jewish families.

In addition to education the World Jewish Congress created the Jewish Diplomatic Corps made up of young people ages 27 to 40. We have trained the greatest young minds to act as emissaries for the Jewish people in their home countries. No other Jewish organization is doing this today. There are 43 JDs from 14 countries in this room our goal is 500 from every country where Jews live. But the JDs can't win this struggle alone, and I will be honest with you, this is the one problem that troubles me deeply.

The Jewish people have traveled thousands of years to this day. We have faced many adversaries along the way. Yet this small group of Jews remains. Call it a miracle, a phenomenon, but it is no accident. There is no nation on earth that can destroy the Jewish people, except one. We can destroy ourselves.

There are too many Jews that I call "Jino's" which stands for "Jew in name only." I know about this, because I was once a Jino myself. Jino's know that they are Jewish but they don't really know what that means. They know more about popular culture than being Jewish. We must help guide them and push them to marry Jewish partners and have more Jewish children. With the exception of the Israelis and the orthodox, our birthrates are not even at replacement levels. When I was born, Jews were 4 percent of the population here in the United States. Today, we are just 1.8 percent. We have to do everything we can to encourage larger families.

There are no easy answers to these problems, and I need you to help me solve them. But let's start now, we have no time to lose. I have been honored to lead the WJC for the past 10 years. I was honored by your unanimous support for my candidacy in Buenos Aires last year and I am looking forward to your confirmation today to work with you for the next 4 years. I am so very grateful and thank you for this honor.

My greatest wish today is that 4 years from now, when my term ends, we will at last be on the road to fixing our most serious problems but I need your help and I want to hear your ideas.

Finally, there is one more problem that we face, it is the great division today within our people. Instead of fighting our enemies Jewish groups are fighting each other, this is so counterproductive and this is where the World Jewish Congress will play an important role.

Earlier I mentioned our survey of Jews around the world. There was one figure that I found absolutely fascinating. In spite of the worries of the increase in anti-Semitism, and the rise of radical Islam, the vast majority of Jews were optimistic about our future and the future of Israel.

When you consider where we have been, what we have seen, and where we are today, I think we have reasons to be optimistic. But we must never stop working to solve the very real problems that we face.

I began this morning telling you what I see standing here. Now I want you to take a look around this room. You see the most orthodox Jews, and the most secular. There are conservative and reform Jews. You see Jews from countries around the world. But we are all here because we have one thing in common: we believe that, in the end, we are all one people.

Let us never again look at what divides us. Let's only concentrate on what we have in common, and that is so much. We are proud of what this one tiny group of people called Jews has brought to the world. Laws, great knowledge, decency, cures for disease, brilliant texts, and the belief in one god.

In spite of all the tyrants, and the hate, we have given the world so much. We have so many reasons to be proud and our children must know this as well. We are one people and we stand with pride. We are one people, and the World Jewish Congress will be the glue that binds us all together. We are one people, and we care about each other. We are one people and this one people will continue.

I have never met a more dedicated and inspiring group of people than all of you in the World Jewish Congress it takes a lot of guts to stand up in today's world and say I am a Jew I am proud and no one will defame my people.

On behalf of myself and my family and Jews around the world I want to thank you and tell you that I am so honored to be among people with your integrity.

Now, I want you to stand as one people and join me in a love song.