

RONALD S. LAUDER
WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS
INAUGURAL THEODOR HERZL AWARD DINNER
MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2012

WELCOME:

Good evening. I'm Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress and chair of tonight's special event. It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to our first Theodor Herzl award dinner. As you know, our honoree, President Shimon Peres, is unable to join us tonight to accept his award in person. The miles between us, however, do not diminish our enormous respect, admiration and affection for president Peres. The last, great founding father of the state of Israel, he is a man of vision and a true champion for peace in our time. We are delighted to also use this occasion to extend heartfelt wishes to President Peres for his upcoming milestone birthday.

Before we begin our program, I ask that we pause and share a moment of silent prayer and remembrance for the victims of Friday's unspeakable and heart wrenching tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut.

Thank you.

I want to extend appreciation to my co-chairs for this evening -- my brother, Leonard Lauder, and Elie Wiesel -- and say a special thank you to all of our esteemed vice chairs, whose names you will find in your dinner journal.

We are fortunate to have with us tonight many distinguished guests and I would like to take a moment to recognize them.

Ambassador Ron Prosor, ambassador of Israel to the UN;

Ambassador Haim Waxman, deputy ambassador of Israel to the UN; and

Shlomi Kofman, Deputy Consul General of Israel.

We are grateful to those who are joining us from Israel's ministry of defense.

Special acknowledgment and much appreciation to the following dignitaries for their continued support of Israel, at the United Nations and beyond:

Ambassador Gilles Rivard, deputy permanent representative of Canada to the UN;

Senator Linda Frum of Canada;

Ambassador Edita Herda of the Czech Republic to the UN;

Ambassador Hans Peter Wittig of Germany to the UN;

Ambassador Zsolt Korösi of Hungary to the UN;

Ambassador Marlene Moses of Nauru to the UN;

Ambassador Stuart Beck of Palau to the UN; and

Ambassador Carlos Ruiz, deputy permanent representative of panama to the UN.

Last but by no means least, we are delighted to be joined tonight by the leadership of some of the most prominent and respected national and international Jewish communal organizations:

Michael Schneider, secretary general emeritus, WJC;

Richard B. Stone, Chairman Of the Conference of Presidents Of Major American Jewish Organizations;

Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman and CEO, conference of presidents;

Stanley Chesley, President, Jewish National Fund;

Russell Robinson, CEO, Jewish National Fund;

Michael Miller, Executive Vice Chairman and CEO, Jewish Community Relations Council of New York;

Dan Mariaschin, Executive Vice President, B'nai B'rith International;

Mark Levin, Executive Director, National Conference On Soviet Jewry;

Shimon Fogel, CEO, the Center For Israel And Jewish Affairs Of Canada.

Thank you all. We are honored by your presence.

Let me express sincere gratitude to each of you here tonight who have come to pay tribute to president Peres and lend your support to the World Jewish Congress.

Through your participation you have become partners in the extremely vital work we do on behalf of Israel and the Jewish people. I hope this evening will inspire you to learn more about WJC and to stay involved with our global efforts.

At this time I am delighted and very proud to announce that this event has raised \$3 million in support of the World Jewish Congress. Thank you for your generosity.

We are living in complicated, troubling times. The granting of non-member observer status to the Palestinians fuels their aggressive strategy to avoid direct talks with Israel. Two thousand missiles launched against Israel from Gaza over an eight day period

illustrate the physical dangers Israel continues to face. Israel is surrounded by enemies. They delegitimize, demonize and isolate Israel. At worst, they seek its very destruction.

Iran's nuclear arms program poses an ominous threat to Israel and the Middle East. While some measures and sanctions have slowed it, none have stopped it.

Around the world, particularly across Europe, we are seeing a resurgence of anti-

Semitism that comes in the form of brutal violence against Jews and Jewish institutions. We are also witnessing a growing assault on Jewish religious customs and heritage from the highest levels of government.

All of these issues are high on our global agenda and, to be sure, this list of challenges is far from complete. The World Jewish congress is on the ground in 100 countries taking effective action wherever and whenever Jewish life, property or cultures are threatened. WJC has always, and will always, stand with Israel as one Jewish family.