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Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Armenian government for organizing this important conference, and for inviting us. When we received the invitation, we immediately understood the significance of this event, and thought that we must accept the invitation and come here to be with you in Yerevan, no matter how pressing our other obligations and engagements were.

Five years ago, when I served as minister of education of the State of Israel, I was invited to the Armenian Church in the old City of Jerusalem to speak on the Memorial Day marking the eighty fifth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. This is, among other things, what I said there at the time:

"I join you, members of the Armenian community, on your Memorial Day, as you mark the 85th anniversary of your genocide. I am here, with you, as a human being, as a Jew, as an Israeli, and as the minister of education in Israel.

Every year, Armenians gather all over the world, and in Israel, to remember and to remind the world of the dreadful tragedy that befell your people at the beginning of the last century.

For many years, too many years, you were alone on your Memorial Day. I am aware of the special significance of my presence here today along with other Israelis. Today, for the first time, you are less alone.

The Armenian Memorial Day should be a day of reflection and introspection for all of us, a day of soul-searching. On this day, we Jews, victims of the Jewish Holocaust, the Shoah, should examine our relationship to the pain of others.

The massacre, which was carried out by the Turks against the Armenians in 1915 and 1916, was one of the most horrible atrocious acts in modern times.

The Jewish ambassador of the United States to Turkey at the time of the slaughter, Henry Morgenthau, described the massacre as "the greatest crime of modern history". Morgenthau did not predict what was in store later in the twentieth century for the Jews, the Shoah, the most terrible crime of all.

A person who was deeply shocked by the calamity he witnessed, was the Prague born Jewish author, Franz Werfel. Werfel made the tragedy known to others through his masterpiece, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. The idea for writing the book emerged in March 1929 when Werfel visited Damascus on his way to Palestine.

He wrote: "the pitiful scene of the starved and mutilated children of the Armenian refugees gave me the last push to redeem the cruel fate of the Armenian people from the abyss of oblivion."

This book, which was published in Germany in 1933, shocked millions of people. Adolph Hitler was then in power and *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* was thrown into the flames with other forbidden books. It was translated to Hebrew in 1934, and influenced scores of young people in Israel, including me. For me and for many youngsters of my generation in Israel, the Forty Days of Musa Dagh had a tremendous formative effect on our personality and on our world outlook.

In Israel, Today, only few young people have heard of Musa Dagh and few know about the Armenian Genocide. I know how important the Jewish position on the Armenian Genocide is to the Armenian people, and that the attitude of the State of Israel is a special concern of yours.

As minister of education of the State of Israel, I will do everything in my capacity, to make this monumental work, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, well known to our children again. I will do everything in order that Israeli children learn and know about the Armenian Genocide.

Genocide is a crime against humanity. There is nothing more horrible and odious than genocide. One of the objectives of our education - our main objective - is to instill sensitivity to harm done to the innocent. We Jews, prime victims of murderous hatred, are doubly obligated to be sensitive and to identify with other victims.

We have to evoke among the young generation natural and deep indignation against manifestations of genocide in the past, in the present, and in the future. Genocide is the root of all evil and we have to make supreme political and educational efforts to uproot it. Whoever stands indifferent in front of it, or ignores it, whoever makes calculations, whoever is silent, always helps the perpetrator of the crime and not the murdered.

I want our school history curriculum to stress the value of human life, no matter for whom - Jew, Arab, Armenian, Gypsy, Bosnian, Albanian, Rwandan or Sudanese.

A new program for the History curriculum is now being written and I would like the chapter on genocide, this huge and inhuman atrocity, to be a central part of it. The Armenian Genocide should occupy a prominent place in this program, which does justice to the national and personal memory of every one of you; moreover, this is our obligation to ourselves.

Now we are on the eve of our Passover Feast. It is the feast in which we celebrate our emergence from slavery to redemption, from slavery to freedom. This is our wish to every nation: Freedom and Redemption - Redemption and Freedom. "

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Armenian community in Israel and over the world took note of that statement with satisfaction. Turkey

complained vehemently, demanding an explanation from the Israeli government. And "my government" of all governments, first stammered, and then, denied responsibility, and then explained that I spoke for myself.

Today, here, I can tell you that even if I did not speak at that time for the Israeli government, I am certain that I spoke then, as I do here now, for many Israelis and Jews, maybe for the majority of the Jewish people. Happily, peoples are not bound by the pros and cons political calculations of their governments.

The official position of the State of Israel is not only the result of a naked political calculation. It conceals a hidden reason, which can be understandable. And I understand it, but I don't agree with it: some Israelis, some Jews, are afraid that

recognizing the suffering of other nations will diminish the unique status of the Jewish holocaust. The holocaust, clearly, was an unprecedented crime of diabolical dimensions against the Jewish people; but the Israelis present here, believe that it was also the greatest crime against humanity as a whole. We believe that the moral lesson of the Jewish holocaust is a universal lesson and not a private-nationalistic one. Not only Germans can commit Genocide and not only Jews could be its victims. Therefore, in every place and at all times, we are against the victimizers and we support the victims.

For that reason we support recognition of the Armenian Genocide as a major crime against humanity. And for that reason we are here, today, together with you.

Thank You