

UNESCO

B'nai B'rith's delegate to UNESCO, Witold Zyss, has sent us regular reports of the discussions and resolutions emanating from the session of the General Conference of UNESCO held in Paris from 25 October to 10 November 2011. A major issue for Israel and its supporters has been the Palestinian application for membership of UNESCO.

Gideon Sa'ar, Israel's Minister of Education, addressed the plenary session on 27th October and his excellent speech is given below.

Addressing the plenary session of UNESCO on 27th October 2011 Gideon Sa'ar, Israel's Minister of Education, underlines Israel's many achievements in the fields of science, technology, culture and the arts.

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates,

Three weeks ago, Professor Daniel Shechtman of the Technion was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry. Professor Shechtman thus became the tenth Israeli to be awarded the Nobel Prize and the sixth in the last nine years. These scientific achievements reflect the very high standards of scientific research and development in Israel. Israeli scientists and researchers are valued contributors to the global achievements in science, research and developments. Sixty three years since its establishment, Israel has shown remarkable achievements in the fields of research and science, culture and arts, advanced technologies, innovative agriculture and more.

Throughout the years, these accomplishments were achieved as Israel was relentlessly holding a sword in one hand. Time and again we were forced to protect ourselves, challenged by perpetual threats and battling for our existence while confronted by armed forces of our neighbouring countries and incessant terror attacks. Despite this precarious reality, Israel remained, from its beginning, a stable and vital democracy, committed to the rule of law.

Israel is naturally a member and an active participant in UNESCO's core activities. However, some members of this organization are diverting it away from its core professional sphere of competence and into the realm of politicization. Israel finds itself

consistently being negatively singled out in UNESCO.

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates,

We and other members regret this anti-Israeli obsession. The only country-specific resolutions adopted by the Executive Board for some time now are against Israel. These resolutions are adopted without consensus, a guiding principle in the work of UNESCO. We are surrounded by countries ruthlessly suppressing their citizens' liberties. The Syrian dictatorship continues to murder its citizens, day after day. The Iranian regime is brutally repressing its own people and enslaving Lebanon and Gaza as well as funding worldwide terror.

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mandated subjects in many Middle Eastern countries cry out for reform. And yet they are not debated in this chamber. UNESCO's implementation of its professional mandate in our region is lacking, while it is constantly engaged in a politicized agenda which is loaded with Israel bashing. I believe that continuing in this direction, will severely undermine UNESCO effectiveness.

A few weeks ago, the Executive Board adopted Resolution on the admission of Palestine to membership of UNESCO. This is a political decision which is outside the field of competence of this

organization. The matter is currently being deliberated in the UN Security Council which is the competent UN organ to deal with Palestinian admission to the UN.

Is it the role of UNESCO to make decisions regarding the "creation" of new states? Of course not. A Palestinian state will not be created as a result of such possible decision. Furthermore, the Palestinians currently fail the most basic legal test of statehood. So, it is impossible for them to fulfill the obligations of membership in UNESCO. The Palestinian bid for admission is also a fundamental breach of the Agreements between the parties.

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates,

Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, expressed publicly our willingness to find a solution which will be based on two states for two nations. The only way to achieve a solution for the conflict is through negotiation between both parties. Instead of choosing the path of negotiations, the Palestinians have chosen to try and internationalize the conflict.

The admission of the Palestinians as members to UNESCO is inconsistent with international law and with the bilateral legal framework that exists between Israel and the Palestinians. It is also inconsistent with the international community's position that this conflict can only be resolved through negotiations.

UNESCO cannot create a viable state by its decision. Such a decision would harm both the organization and the peace process. The Palestinians have chosen this path for the same reason they have rejected the UN resolution of 1947 and the partition into two states. It is due to their profound and uncompromising refusal to acknowledge the Jewish state and end this conflict.

They request statehood, a façade of a state, actually. It is not as part of a solution to the conflict, but only to prolong it and use it in their battle against Israel from a more favorable position. Israel wants peace. Israel paid heavy tolls for achieving peace.

The Palestinian Authority itself was created by Israel following the Oslo agreements. Israel has relinquished from territories according to agreements as well as unilaterally. Thousands of Israelis were uprooted from their homes. But peace can only be achieved through direct negotiation and not by taking advantage of International Organizations.

By passing the route of negotiations will hinder efforts to end the conflict and achieve peace, maybe for many years.

Do not harm the chance for peace.

Do not harm UNESCO.

Do not allow it.

Thank you