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Thank you, John. Distinguished delegates and colleagues, dear friends, it is a pleasure to be here again and an honour to speak in front of you on behalf of the state of Israel. First I would like to express my deepest appreciation for the gracious Bahraini hospitality. Thank you to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince His Royal Highness Sheikh Salman, for this outstanding event. Also thanks to the IISS Manama Dialogue organisers and especially to you, John, for your true friendship. Minister Dendias, I would like to thank you and your Prime Minister Mitsotakis for a role in strengthening the Israeli–Greek partnership. You have demonstrated the value of having like-minded neighbours in a regional arena as well as within the European Union numerous times over the years. My close friend Brett McGurk, on a personal note, I have enjoyed working with you in strengthening the strategic partnership between our countries and specifically on building security partnership in the Middle East. I want to thank you for all that you have done and through you to thank President Biden for the ironclad strategic partnership with Israel.

Last year I stood on this stage and described regional threats and opportunities. My underlying message was that Israel's contribution to the region's stability and prosperity was becoming visible. A year later, I think that we can proudly reflect on several important achievements and conclude that the contribution of an integrated Israel resonates far beyond the Middle East borders. In the past year, we worked closely with our allies and partners to enhance regional stability through diplomatic, economic and military means while creating a hub for cooperation to jointly tackle energy, food, food-security, technological and climate-related challenges that benefit the citizens of the region as well as the global community.

More than anything, we worked together to defend against Iran. Israel's most prominent security threat is clearly Iran. More broadly, Iran is the most dangerous challenge for most of the countries in the region. Building upon the message delivered by the President of the European Commission, Ms Ursula von der Leyen, in her opening statement of this conference, in recent months it is becoming more obvious than ever that Iran is a global clear and present danger.

Here is a brief list of events we all should be aware of just from this year. Alongside constant attacks against Israeli and American forces, Iran has increased its proxy activities to destabilise Yemen, Iraq and Syria. Iran uses cyber attacks on a regular basis but this year they took the freedom to even attack civilian infrastructure in Albania, a NATO member. Iran has dramatically bolstered its kinetic attacks against civilian infrastructure in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) and Saudi Arabia. We all remember the cruise- and ballistic-missile rounds on 17, 24, 3 January and 1 February in the UAE. That should have been unheard of. In recent weeks, Iranian drones are killing civilian Ukrainians.

If Iran is not stopped, it is likely that they will deploy accurate and short-range ballistic missiles as well. They also continue their habit to crash drones on civilian vessels in international waters. An oil tanker named *Pacific Zircon* was attacked not far from the shore of Oman just a few days ago. This is in addition to Iran's terrorist attacks throughout the world against Israelis, Europeans, Americans and opposition Iranian descents in Turkey, Cyprus, Colombia, Georgia, Germany, UK and even the United States, just to name a few locations of terror attacks. This is all aimed at all of us, but this year Iran has embarked on a brutal crackdown against its own people.

Israel has been saying that for years, and so many distinguished speakers have said clearly from this stage, each in their own words, enough. Enough with futile talks in Vienna as they are advancing their nuclear programme. Enough with ignoring Iranian deception and manipulation of the IAEA

(International Atomic Energy Agency) inspectors. Enough with keeping a blind eye as they smuggle arms on a regular basis to feed regional terror. And enough with hoping in vain that a corrupt and dangerous regime will play nice. Even the people of Iran are saying enough. How can the international community look away as the people of Iran are targeted, abused, arrested and killed for the pursuit of freedom in their own homeland? I know anything Israelis say about the protests will be politically labelled. We are always accused in anything bad that is happening in Iran, but this is not about us. This is about freedom. Personally, as a son of a Persian-descent mother, I extend a direct message to the brave people of Iran. *Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*. In English it is women, life, freedom.

In the past year Israel has worked closely with the American administration to ensure that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons, a joint goal we all share. President Biden has shown his resolve and commitment that Iran will never acquire nuclear weapons and that the US will adhere to its commitment towards its interests and partners in the region. We deepened our policy, operational-intelligence cooperation with the US, the E3 (France, Germany, United Kingdom) and our partners in the region, to better cope with Iranian aggression and to intensify the pressure on the Iranian regime. Together we will continue to form a regional architecture that could protect countries from the threat of rockets, missiles and drones, preserve the freedom of maritime navigation and thwart cyber and terrorist attacks. This is in the best interest of all countries represented in this room today.

I want to move to talk on regional integration and seizing opportunities. In the past year, we took Israel's integration into the region to new heights. Many new initiatives are materialising, bridging between countries and addressing core challenges with the power to reshape the regional landscape. We deepened our relations with the signatory countries of the Abraham Accords. A free-trade agreement with the UAE was signed and we have similar drafts to be signed soon with Bahrain. Security arrangements were concluded with multiple countries. Trade and tourism were enhanced with Morocco and much more. The Negev Summit has gathered in Israel the foreign ministers of the countries in the region together with the American secretary of state to deliver a message of friendship and partnership. The I2U2 forum, putting together Israel, India, the US and the UAE, has convened both on foreign-ministers and heads-of-state levels to promote economic projects, particularly in food security and clean energy.

We strengthened our relations with Jordan and with Egypt. The leaders of our countries met multiple times during the last year and fortified the joint commitment to collaboration and peace. Last year I flew from here directly to Dubai to sign a declaration of intent with Jordan to build Prosperity Green, a 600MW-capacity solar plant with storage to be built in Jordan for Israeli use, and Prosperity Blue, the export to Jordan of 200 million cubic metres of desalinated water per year from Israel. Last week during COP 27 at Sharm El-Sheikh another milestone was reached and signed in the prosperity projects, and we are all working hard to implement them as fast as possible.

We also expanded our attempts to increase regional integration beyond the Abraham Accords. Drawing on American leadership, an agreement was reached with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to allow the development in the Red Sea while maintaining proper security arrangements. Saudi Arabia approved for the first time that Israeli airlines can fly freely over the Kingdom. There are still hurdles. Nothing is easy in the Middle East, but we have made progress that I believe and hope will materialise in the near future and open the way for more regional integration.

And finally, we recently signed a ground-breaking agreement with Lebanon to end a long maritime dispute. I want to thank President Biden and the facilitator Amos Hochstein for brokering this deal. A lot was said about this agreement both in Lebanon and in Israel, but here are the plain and simple facts, as my friend also talked about it just a few minutes ago. Two countries with a long history of war have reached an agreement for the economic benefit of both peoples. Israel has secured its

claimed maritime territorial border while the development of present and future prospects could now be carried out without threats. Israel hopes that this agreement will benefit the Lebanese people, assist in the economic recovery of their country and reduce the damaging grip of Iran. This agreement will also have a stabilising effect in the entire Eastern Mediterranean zone and in continuity to the East Mediterranean Gas Forum achievements and the Egypt–EU–Israeli LNG (liquefied natural gas) agreement signed in Cairo in June.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, our work has yielded remarkable success in the last year. This is only the beginning and the sky is the limit. The achievements we have reached this year have improved Israel's security whilst spreading good in the near region and the wider global arena. This is our neighbourhood. I am confident that Israel's integration in the region is vital for a better future for all of us and for global stability. My hope is that this process will continue and that in future years we will all see progress and prosperity that will make us all proud. Thank you.

**Dr John Chipman, Director-General and Chief Executive, IISS**

Thank you very much, Eyal, for that very strong statement and for the variety of agreements and initiatives that were described in it.