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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE

WEIZMANN INSTITUTE, MELBOURNE

I am grateful for the invitation to Tamie and me to be with you tonight. In particular, it is a great pleasure to celebrate with you the establishment of a new scientific chair, at the Weizmann Institute in Israel.

I am honoured that you have decided to name this chair after me. The honour increases with the knowledge that the Weizmann Institute will always be synonymous with excellence in scientific research. Such research is a most exacting discipline requiring painstaking and often disheartening experimentation. It demands patience, rationality, open-mindedness, intellectual honesty, and above all, humility.

The truly great scientists have had, in addition to these qualities, a breadth of vision and an appreciation of the human condition which have enabled them to recognise the practical importance of scientific research.

Dr Chaim Weizmann demonstrated an active and profound awareness of this. ~~And it is only fitting that his influence has inspired the academic ideals and the structure of the Institute which bears his name. However, Dr Weizmann was more than a great scientist. He was also a great statesman who, from his early years in Russia, dedicated himself to the goal of establishing a homeland for his people. He was in the forefront of the Zionist movement through a momentous fifty years of Jewish history. Indeed he led the World Zionist Organisation for well over a quarter of a century.~~

He was present at the Basle Conference in 1897 when Theodore Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, introduced to the world at large, the concept and ideas of the movement. But if Theodore Herzl was truly the father of Zionism, then surely Dr Weizmann was the father of its product, the State of Israel. He was President of the Zionist movement at crucial times between the Basle Conference and the proclamation of Israel in 1948. In recognition of his enormous contribution he was appointed the first President of Israel.

Dr Weizmann was not an idealogue. Nor was he an aggressively single-minded radical. His great qualities were those he put to such good use as a scientist - patience, perseverance and quiet reason. His contribution as a statesman is epitomised by that landmark in the history of Jewish nationalism, the Balfour Declaration of 1917. This statement of intent by the British Government was the product of years of quiet diplomacy on Dr Weizmann's part. It was not only a tribute to his powers of reason but also a measure of the high regard in which he was held by the British Government of the day.

There were many other occasions where Dr Weizmann's diplomatic qualities achieved milestones on the road to Jewish statehood; and these include the commitment of President Truman to the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine after World War II. These qualities were displayed by Dr Weizmann throughout his life. It is not surprising therefore that although he was a dedicated Jewish nationalist, he remained sensitive to the position of the Arabs in Palestine. He was a visionary who saw no contradiction in the proposition that Israel could have territorial integrity, and peace with the Arabs. Today, for the first time since the creation of the state, Israel is in direct negotiation with an Arab country. The potential benefits of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, not only to the region, but to all mankind, are enormous. Failure to continue along the path that has now been taken would be fraught with danger and would pose a great threat to international peace and security.

Of course, Israel has an awesome responsibility in this process. It is a challenge and a responsibility that Dr Weizmann would have relished. In the formidable task that lies ahead, the people of Israel may be assured of the firm commitment of my government to Israel's fundamental and non-negotiable right to live within secure and recognised boundaries. But we also believe that no comprehensive peace will be possible without a recognition that the Palestinians have a legitimate right to a homeland of their own alongside Israel's.

It must be the hope of all of us that, in the months and years ahead, people with the integrity and the vision of Dr Weizmann can sit down on both sides of the negotiating table and hammer out the details of such a peace. Of course, its achievement will be a complex matter, fraught with grave and serious dangers. If it was ever thought to be simply an equation involving Israel and the Arab states, then surely the events of the last few years have destroyed such a notion.

We face increasing instability in the region, highlighting the difficulties faced by the West in maintaining its supplies of oil. The interests of the Soviet Union are all too plain. In short, there are many strands influencing affairs in the Middle East, and the difficulties in securing a just peace between Israel and her Arab neighbours is only one of those strands.

In all this we should have three paramount objectives, which are not going to be easy to achieve together - a just and permanent peace between Israel and the Arab states, the maintenance of oil supplies to the West, and the exclusion of the Soviet Union from increased influence over an area of such vast importance.

The achievement of these objectives will require a degree of statesmanship from all interested parties which we cannot automatically assume will be forthcoming. For inevitably there will be temptations to engage in political bargaining, political trade-offs, and political expediency. There might appear enticing but they offer no lasting solutions to the real problems. ~~Statesmanship must prevail~~ - statesmanship of the kind which was amply demonstrated by Dr Weizmann during his distinguished career.

However, tonight, the emphasis in our memory of Dr Weizmann is on his scientific achievement and his leadership of scientific teams. In 1933, he founded a centre for scientific research in what was then British-mandated Palestine. The Institute was an inspiration to scientific excellence and rapidly achieved international recognition. Greatly expanded, it later became known as the Weizmann Institute and aimed its work initially at projects to support the territory's economy. Initially, such research work concentrated on agricultural problems. When war came, the research laboratories were turned over to the development and production of pharmaceuticals for the allied forces in the Middle East.

This close co-operation between research and its practical implementation has been maintained and is one of the major reasons why the Institute is world renowned. In fact, throughout his scientific career, Dr Weizmann chose to work in those areas of science which would provide practical benefits to the problems faced within his country.

In this way, he set himself a double discipline of quality and of relevance. He understood early that the problems of development in Israel would have to be tackled by Israel itself; that research conducted somewhere else would be unlikely to lead to the kinds of solutions that would be relevant to Israel's environment.

Much of this approach has a familiar ring to us because our early pioneers, in their attempts to develop this country, soon found that the harsh Australian environment was unsuited to many of the methods that were operating successfully in other parts of the world. Over the years, we have had to build up skills and scientific expertise in a number of fields of particular relevance to Australia. Under great pressures and confronted with very significant difficulties, Israel has done the same. And, faced with economic and military adversity, the Weizmann Institute has become a centre of scientific excellence.

It is perhaps significant that the Institute has had a deep involvement in the area of immunology. For this is also the field of two of Australia's most distinguished scientists, Sir MacFarlane Burnett, the Patron of your Association, and Sir Gustav Nossal, your President.

I know you will agree with me when I say that both these men embody all the qualities of the truly great scientists. Like Dr Weizmann, their influence has been felt in other areas outside their field of specialisation, and in the community at large. Of course, science is not the monopoly of any particular country or ideology. That is why scientific co-operation is increasingly

being seen as an important element of developing relations between particular countries. In a world of increasing complexity, it makes little sense for countries to duplicate each other's research work when, through co-operation, the burden and benefit of scientific research can be spread.

Beyond the scientific benefit of such co-operation which involves not only the exchange of research papers and results, but also visits by scientists and discussion of common problems, there is the benefit of a growing understanding of each other's country.

I am proud of the strong relations which have developed between Australia and Israel since the establishment of that state thirty-one years ago. Our two countries have much in common, not only as relatively new states, but also in the emphasis which our peoples place on individual freedom and true Parliamentary democracy.

These elements are basic to society in both countries. It therefore gives me great pleasure to celebrate a development such as the establishment of a scientific chair at the Weizmann Institute which I am confident will contribute significantly to relations between Australia and Israel.

And I thank you again for the honour you confer on me and Australia in allowing the new chair to bear my name.

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