

against Katyusha rockets, and by the U.S. providing \$25 million for anti-terrorism assistance.

Thanks to the industriousness of its people, and with the help of American financial assistance and free trade agreements with both the United States and the European Union, Israel has transformed itself from a small, agriculturally-based economy in a largely desert climate into a modern, successful, high-tech economy.

Israel's industrial exports are today 1,380 times what they were 47 years ago. Its Gross Domestic Product has risen from \$2.5 billion in the 1960s to \$90.6 billion last year. Its computer industry and agricultural technology are some of the most successful and innovative in the world.

Israel has also seen phenomenal growth in health care and education. More than 33% of Israelis have formal schooling of 13 years compared from 6% in the 1960's and the life expectancy of Israelis is among the longest in the world. It is a sign of Israel's economic maturation that in January of this year, Israel and the United States began to discuss proposals to reduce and phase out U.S. economic aid to Israel.

For Israel's long-term security and economic success, there is no higher priority than the achievement of a permanent peace settlement with all of its neighbors. The peace treaties with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994 were the first steps in that process. The United States has stood by Israel in its desire to achieve peace with its neighbors, and will continue to work to help Israel achieve peace with Syria, Lebanon, other Arab nations, and, perhaps most urgently, to fulfill the promise of the handshake between the late Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn in 1993 by achieving a final peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

For all of us who care so deeply for Israel's security, who long to see Israel achieve peace with its neighbors, the current peace process has reached a critical juncture. Since Israel's security can best be guaranteed by peace between it and its neighbors, the United States must remain prepared to do everything we can to help reach a successful conclusion to this peace process. That is the best 50th birthday present we can give the people of Israel.

On this historic occasion, I would like to offer my utmost congratulations to President Weizman, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and the people they represent, and express my deep admiration for the accomplishments of the State and people of Israel, a nation that has risen from the darkest moments of history to rebuild itself as an example of the capabilities of the human spirit, the unbreakable ties that exist among a people, and the great justice of democracy. May Israel's next 50 years bring it even greater success.●

#### FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE

● Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, today we are celebrating one of the greatest achievements of the twentieth century—the founding of the state of Israel. I rise to congratulate the people of Israel for a half century of independence—and to look forward to a future of peace and prosperity.

The story of Israel is unique. A people forced into exile, who endured centuries of persecution, rebuilt their ancient homeland. They forged a nation where they could practice their ancient faith and traditions. They created an open and free democratic society. And always, they offer a home to Jewish immigrants from around the world.

The founding of Israel followed the most incomprehensible and evil event of the twentieth century, when the Nazis—with the complicity of so many others—sought to exterminate a people. The survivors of the Holocaust helped to build modern Israel. Never again will the Jewish people be dependent on anyone else for their security.

At first Israelis envisioned an agrarian society. But today, Israel is a center for technology and science. American scientists and engineers are working as partners with Israelis to develop the innovations of the next century. Our great federal laboratories, like the National Institutes of Health, are now working with Israeli scientists on a cure for cancer and other deadly diseases.

America's relationship with Israel is also unique. We share common goals, values and interests. We stand by each other in good times and bad.

Israel has had to endure five wars and live in constant readiness for battle. They live with the constant threat of terrorism. America must continue to stand by Israel—to make sure they have what they need to protect themselves. We must also stand by them in stopping their enemies from developing the weapons of mass destruction—and the missiles to deliver these deadly weapons.

We all hope that the next century will bring peace to Israel and its neighbors. Five years ago, we witnessed the famous handshakes on the White House lawn. These handshakes heralded a new commitment toward peace.

The peace process is now stalled. There is a crisis of confidence and a lack of trust. There has been a lot of finger-pointing about who is to blame. But let's remember how much Israel has given up for peace. Let's remember the Sinai and Hebron. No victorious power has ever given up more for peace.

Mr. President: I salute the people of Israel as they celebrate fifty years of independence, and I look forward to a future of peace, prosperity and friendship.●

#### 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

● Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in recognition of the warm bonds of affection that exist between the people of Israel and the people of the United States, and the enduring friendship that unites our two nations, I rise today to congratulate the State of Israel on the 50th Anniversary of its birth as an independent nation.

Mr. President, no people in the world have more in common with Americans than the people of Israel. No two nations are more committed to freedom, to justice, and to peace than Israel and the United States.

As nations of immigrants, we cherish our common culture and honor the rich traditions that make us one. We revere our families, nourish our faith, and never hesitate to make sacrifices in the present if they will secure a better future for our children.

As such, we make loyal friends and determined adversaries—as both our friends and our foes around the world have learned throughout the years.

Mr. President, those shared values and similar heritage have made us more than fellow democracies. They've made us fast friends, valued trading partners, and strategic allies. And I pray that nothing ever happens to change that relationship.

These things were never clearer to me than they were when I visited Israel last year. It was, in fact, my first foreign visit as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. What I learned and saw there will remain with me for the rest of my life.

Together with my wife, Karyn, I visited Jericho, Haifa and Tel Aviv. I traveled to the Golan Heights, spent a night on a kibbutz, and stood on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. I met with diplomats and military leaders, visited industries and hospitals, and throughout it all I was excited by Israel's economy and impressed with its commitment to technological excellence.

But my most memorable moments had nothing to do with international politics or diplomacy. They came from my contact with a people whose spirit is as strong and unshakable as the 3,000 years of history that lies beneath every step one takes in that holy land.

Mr. President, in preparing for my trip to Israel, and especially to Jerusalem, I read a lot about its topography, its history, its climate, and its culture. But nothing prepared me for its incomparable beauty. It is a place whose sights and melodies permeate your being and leave an indelible mark on your soul.

After experiencing it first-hand, it is not at all hard to imagine why this 3,000-year-old link—unmatched in all of history—exists between a place and a people, and why—even through centuries of war, oppression, exile and dispersion—that link has never been severed.

But Israel is much more than its collected history, as the last five decades