

**Remarks by His Majesty King Abdullah II
Centre for Strategic and International Studies**

**Washington, DC
24 April 2009**

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate,

Thank you, General Scowcroft. I am delighted to be with all of you this afternoon. CSIS has been a tremendous source of understanding about the important relationship between the Middle East and the United States. It is an honour to be invited to join in your dialogue.

My friends,

Today I want to talk about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has almost defined the modern history of my region. But I do not want to talk about missed opportunities. I want to focus on the urgency of not missing any more ... and on why, and how, the United States can lead.

The US has a stated, strategic interest in ending this conflict. Few crises in history have presented such a potent mix of threats – from the regional instability and violence it promotes – to the worldwide divisions it has caused, divisions actively exploited by extremists. But, there have been equally few situations where a just solution could bring such powerful benefits – not only to the parties, not only to the region, but to the world as a whole.

Yet time, my friends, is not on our side. Every day we lose makes the conflict much harder to resolve. And that is a danger to all of us.

I know this is understood by President Obama and his team. The President gave early signals that Middle East peace will be a priority for the United States. We in Jordan welcome his commitment and engagement. And we are not alone. Every country in the Middle East, and perhaps even the world, sees the United States as being the key to achieving peace. America's strategic interests will be advanced by a peace settlement ... and in the eyes of the world, American credibility will be advanced as well.

Tackling the issue, head-on, is now imperative. Success urgently demands, not more process, but more results. That means a clear plan to reach a comprehensive peace – one that builds on the achievements of previous negotiations. And there must also be a vigorous leadership commitment, to ensure negotiations move fast, towards reconciliation on the basis of the two-state solution.

My friends,

We do not have time to engage in yet another open-ended process. We have seen what comes of process without progress. Every missed opportunity has alienated more people on both sides. Such a course increases distrust and difficulties and fuels those who seek to carry the parties down the path of confrontation.

Yet this path cannot help either party get where it needs to be. For Palestinians to reap the promise of the 21st century, for Israelis to achieve the enduring security they seek, there must be an end ... to occupation and confrontation ... to settlement-building ... to unilateral actions in Jerusalem. There must be a settlement that fulfils the legitimate rights of both parties – the right of Palestinians to statehood, and the right of Israelis to security.

One of the vital functions the United States can play right now, is to help its friends think and act in these strategic terms. That means keeping the focus on where the parties want to be – in ten, twenty, thirty years and more; the hopes and horizons for themselves and their children – and then setting a direction towards that future, now.

Through its own focus, through its own resolve, the United States will set the standard. Events are already testing American credibility. These include the Israeli voices for turning back the clock on negotiations – to disestablish the established agenda for peace. And they include extremist voices in the Arab world that preach war. I hope that the United States will make it clear that it will not accept retrograde movement. The elements of a settlement are known; the agenda for negotiations is agreed; there is a clear objective: Two states, each sovereign, viable, and secure. Such a settlement is a vital US interest, and it is equally vital to your interests that the world see the US lead the way.

Indeed, the groundwork is there. The two-state settlement has been agreed by the parties and the entire international community. And for seven years, against all provocation, the landmark Arab Peace Initiative has held. The initiative lays out the parameters of a comprehensive settlement – ending the occupation ... creating a Palestinian state ... and providing security guarantees and normal relations for Israel. Muslim countries around the world have also expressed their support. This offers Israel a place in its neighbourhood and more: acceptance by the one-third of the UN members – that's 57 countries – that still do not recognize Israel.

By its unanimous voice, by its serious approach, the Arab Peace Initiative is the most important proposal for peace in the history of this conflict. We have made our choice: a comprehensive peace that meets the legitimate needs of all. Israel now has to make its choice. To integrate into the region, accepted and accepting, with normal relations with its neighbours. Or to remain fortress Israel, isolated, and holding itself and the entire region a hostage to continuing confrontation.

And let me be clear: any Israeli effort to substitute Palestinian development for Palestinian independence cannot bring peace and stability to the region. The path for peace can go only through the two-state solution. No other solution can offer the justice

that people demand and expect. And no other solution can give people a reason to take the risks peace requires.

Israel must know that attempting to delay this solution will be disastrous for its own future as well as for the future of the Palestinians. I cannot emphasize enough how important US partnership is, to help Israel accept the opening the Arab world has offered, work with us, and move forward.

Now is the time for the United States to lead, to ensure that no more time is wasted. Failing to act means that we will all lose. The status quo is simply untenable. The dangers are too many and too big to ignore. A moment of truth is here, for all who claim to seek peace and justice. It is a time for partnership, courage and action.

It begins with an effective peace plan for 2009 and beyond – a plan of negotiations that can achieve concrete results quickly, and stop a drift towards confrontation. I say plan, not process, for a reason. The very term "peace process" is an artefact of history. When it was coined in the 1970s, the idea was to break the decades of deadlock, by taking an incremental approach. And in the following decades we did see breakthroughs. Great leaders, like my late father His Majesty King Hussein and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, gave their all to make progress happen.

Today, I do not diminish those achievements, when I say, that this old idea has seen its day. The peace process must end, because we have reached the time for the end-game, in which all sides can win.

Allow me to touch on some areas where creative US leadership can advance that goal.

First is in understanding the region-wide framework for action. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict does not take place in a vacuum. Regional crises and events are deeply interconnected. Successful policy must be part of a holistic approach. This includes a division of labour with regional partners. One example is the work Arab states are already doing to encourage Palestinian reconciliation. International support will advance this effort. In this and similar actions, US policy can help empower the region's forces of moderation.

A second key area for US leadership is reinforcing the foundation for peace. Development aid will not succeed if it is designed as a substitute for Palestinian independence. But independence will be most successful when it delivers opportunities for fruitful, normal daily life. Benefits and incentives need to be devised that will create and sustain the conditions for co-existence and progress.

A third area for US leadership is in the powerful messages your actions can send – especially, by your response to Palestinian suffering. Signals are delivered when the US ensures relief and rebuilding in Gaza, and provides humanitarian aid in the West Bank. But signals are also sent when your country acts, or fails to act, against the daily hardships of West Bank life ... against illegal settlement building ... against Israeli actions to force Jerusalem's Arab, Muslim and Christian population out or threaten Muslim and Christian holy sites. The US commitment to Palestinian statehood must be

unambiguous, in deeds as well as words. This is central to America's standing, not only in the region, but the entire Muslim world.

Let me say, Arabs and Muslims throughout the world took note of the President's inaugural pledge, for a new partnership based on mutual respect and mutual interest. His out-reach since then has been well received in the Arab world.

This good beginning needs to move forward without any break. A high-level US effort is needed to regenerate bilateral negotiations. And when the parties get to the table, US support must continue. Where there is deadlock, let the US break the impasse by proposing its own creative solutions. Beginning to end, the focus must be a final peace agreement; one that reflects the only viable solution to this conflict ... the two-state solution, which will open the door to comprehensive Middle East peace.

My friends,

This year marks 60 years of diplomatic ties between Jordan and the United States. Our partnership has been tested by crises. We have talked truth to each other ... listened to each other ... and worked together. We have had differences. This is the way of friends. But we have never lost sight of the value of our strategic partnership, or the vital goals we share: peace, prosperity, security.

Today, we stand together at yet another critical moment. The regional problems are complex and real. But in our world, we have seen rapid, positive transformations when strategic interests are clear. The parties, the region, the world, all deeply need this peace. And all are watching to see how America will lead.

I believe that peace can succeed – and we should settle for nothing less. In that effort, I pledge Jordan's continued partnership. And just as we ask the parties to do, let the friends of peace, too, think ahead, to the strategic picture. Ten years from now, meeting here, we could be, we should be, talking about the challenges of life after peace ... and how to advance our new era of global co-existence. But to do that in the year 2019, we must also be able to say: our countries did what needed to be done, back in 2009, with courage and action.

Thank you very much.