José Manuel Durão Barroso
President of the European Commission

Moving together towards a brighter future

Haifa University
Haifa, 10 July 2012
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking Professor Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, President of the University of Haifa, and Mr Leon Cherney, Chair of the Board of Governors.

I am deeply grateful and honoured to receive this honorary degree from such a prestigious and dynamic university, committed to "fostering mutual understanding between Jews and non-Jews."

It is indeed a real privilege to be here as President of the European
Commission, particularly as you are celebrating the 40\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the accreditation of your institution as an independent university.

Article 2 of the Constitution of Haifa university states that it "is based on the principle of academic freedom and is open to all persons without distinction of race, religion, nationality or sex."

Article 2 of the European Union Treaty, the Lisbon treaty, states that "the Union is founded on the values of respect of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human
rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities."

This striking similarity demonstrates our shared fundamental values and our common belief in the power of ideas, fuelled by a determination to uphold them at all times.

One of the European Union founding fathers, a "beautiful mind" of the very beginning of European integration, Jean Monnet, used to say that "When an idea corresponds to the requirements of an age, it ceases to belong to the men who invented it and is stronger than those who are charged with promoting it."
This truth has been borne out through the development of the European Union itself, - a great idea turned into reality: the reconciliation, and coexistence of nations and peoples that had been divided for so long.

Europe was finally reunited, not so long ago, thanks to the victory of peace and democracy over the worst forces of destruction and oppression.

Working together, the nations and peoples of Europe have forged a new type of Union, which respects
the different political and cultural traditions and the rights of its citizens.

Yes, ideas really are powerful. And Israel itself is the successful product of visionaries, who also dared to fight for an idea. As in Europe, the Jewish people also dreamed of a new beginning. And, as in Europe, Israel also achieved that dream.

But we should not take our achievements for granted. We must continuously strive to preserve and strengthen our founding values, not least at a time when we all have to
adapt to a fast-changing and challenging world.

We must never allow the old demons to re-emerge. We know too well that the quality of any democracy is measured by the way it treats its most vulnerable citizens, in particular minority communities. A chain is only as strong as it weakest link.

Europe and Israel must both continue as strong democracies, staunchly committed to a vibrant civil society, respect for human rights and rights of people belonging to minorities.
I find it essential to state this here, in a multi-cultural city such as Haifa, coming myself from a Union whose motto is "United in diversity", and addressing here in this pluralistic university those who will shape the future of this region.

But the EU-Israel relationship is not just based on our shared values, fundamental though they are. There are also solid bonds of history and kinship. And I am sure that many of you here today have friends, perhaps even family in Europe. Europe is also part of you, of your values and of your culture.
Indeed, it is on this powerful basis that we have built a dynamic relationship; economically, politically and culturally.

In 2004, Israel was the first of our neighbours to agree a "Joint Action Plan" under the so-called European Neighbourhood Policy.

Our economic ties run deep. Israel is an important trading partner for the European Union in the Mediterranean area. And the European Union is the first trading partner for Israel, with total trade amounting to 29.4 billion Euros in
2011. And after a fall in 2009, foreign investment flows have started to rise again.

Every day we work together for our mutual benefit on a wide range of issues, from agreements recently signed by Israel with the European Space Agency to cooperation of a number of EU agencies with their Israeli counterparts.

But the area I would like to single out here today is the cooperation in science, research and technology. This is certainly one of the biggest achievements of our partnership. A continent such as Europe, that
invests heavily in innovation, needs to have close links with a "start-up nation", like Israel.

Today, Israel is one of the most successful non-EU member states to be associated to the current European Framework Programme for Research.

And your university is a concrete illustration of this fruitful cooperation, with over 25 projects funded in the 7th RTD Framework programme, but also in educational projects under the TEMPUS programme that has proven its value in modernising higher education and helping future
generations to face global challenges.

We know that in today's globalised world, education, research and innovation will make the difference. This has to be our competitive edge. As a former president of Harvard University, Derek Bok, once said: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

This is why, despite the current European budgetary constraints, we continue to prioritise investment in key areas such as innovation, research and education. This is the right way to achieve economic
growth and to create more and better jobs in the future.

With the future "Horizon 2020" research funding programme, the European Commission has proposed an 80 billion euro Research and Innovation package for 2014-2020, an increase of 46% as compared to the current programme.

"Horizon 2020" will have a sharpened economic focus - taking ideas from concept to market and turning scientific breakthroughs into innovative products and services. And I welcome the interest
expressed by Israel in this programme. We should prepare the ground and, once the legal basis for Israel's participation in EU programmes is in place, we can negotiate Israel's association to "Horizon 2020."

We can also do more regarding Israel's participation in educational programmes such as "Erasmus Mundus" and "Jean Monnet". In the future, the "Erasmus for all" programme will have a strong international dimension, in particular in higher education and youth, and will give a privileged place to
neighbouring countries, such as Israel.

I am committed to strengthening our cooperation in these key areas of education, research and innovation. And this is not only because of my academic background or my role as President of the European Commission. It is because I am a father and a grandfather. And I believe in a society that gives a chance to everyone to develop his or her skills. As the Talmud tells us: “The one who teaches his son, teaches his son’s son”.
I also believe that innovation is nothing less than our capacity to create the future we aspire to.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current economic situation in Europe is a cause of concern for many. The situation is difficult and we are not complacent about it. The current crisis, despite not having started in Europe nor being solely a European problem, has revealed some economic weaknesses in a number of our Member States and also deficiencies in our governance model and in our monetary union.
In fact, 17 of the 27 European Union Member States share a currency. But our monetary union was imperfect, as we did not have all the mechanisms to defend our single currency or the tools to withstand turmoil in the markets.

So throughout these last years, we had not only to weather the storm, but at the same time to build the lifeboats.

Yet, while I fully and openly recognise our problems, I can also tell you that we are dealing with them with resolute action.
We are repairing our banking system; strengthening our economic governance; setting up credible financial firewalls and providing unprecedented solidarity to those Member States more exposed to the crisis. And, of course, we are also promoting structural reforms for the medium and longer term.

But while these immediate response measures are crucial, so is the course we have set for the years to come. We have embarked on a process of deepening the European project, which will take us into a closer, stronger and more united Europe.
We are now starting to work on the building blocks to complete our monetary union with a banking union, a fiscal union, a truly economic union and – ultimately - a political union.

Only by acting together as a Union can Europe have the relevant dimension and a greater say in today’s world. And it is only by remaining open to the world that we will be able to bring more prosperity to our citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Our bilateral relationship is not only mutually beneficial to both Europe and Israel. It can also be a positive force for the region as a whole.

The European Union is committed to the stability and prosperity of its southern neighbourhood and to the aspirations of all the peoples who are striving for lasting peace, freedom, democracy, security and prosperity.

The European Union will always stand with those who are ready to take their responsibilities to build democratic institutions, to support universal values of human rights and
minority rights, and to allow the existence of a diversified civil society.

Of course we know that transitions will take time and we will face turbulence in the coming months, or even coming years.

As Nelson Mandela once said: "After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb."

The journey of political and economic reforms in the Middle East will not be easy. But all of us should be determined to see it succeed.
When faced with events that affect us all we cannot afford to be bystanders; and when faced with a choice between democracy and oppression we will always side with democracy.

A regime that kills its own people has no place in the community of nations. We strongly condemn the brutal violence and massacres of civilians we witness in Syria.

We fully support Kofi's Annan's plans and welcome his efforts to work with key international partners to move the political process forward. But in the absence of
progress on the ground we urge all Security Council members to assume their responsibilities to stop the bloodshed of more innocents.

We are also urging Iran to decide whether it is willing to commit to a serious negotiation process and address the concerns of the international community over its nuclear enrichment programme.

We favour a negotiated solution to this problem, but while no solution is found we are determined to keep in place our strict sanctions that have just entered into force last week and are already producing effects.
But while the attention of the international community is focused on the events in these countries, I would like to recall in very clear terms the urgency to resume negotiations on the Middle East Peace Process.

I am still convinced that this is a key issue to achieve regional and global stability.

Israeli and Palestinian peoples have the right to expect a bold and decisive demonstration of political leadership from leaders on both sides.
A conclusion of the Middle East Peace Process is crucial for the region and for the well-being of future generations.

The only viable way forward is a negotiated two-state solution with a secure and recognised State of Israel with an independent, democratic and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

Here, at the University of Haifa, you must have the right to study and teach without being threatened by the risk of deadly rocket strikes or
terrorist attacks. Israel has the right to live in security within its borders. And Palestinians have the right to establish their own independent and democratic State on their side of the 1967 borders.

Meanwhile no actions should be taken that would jeopardize the viability of a two-state solution. A one State reality should not replace a two state solution. We are deeply concerned that continued settlement activity renders more remote the two-state solution that is in Israel's fundamental interest.
I am fully aware that this is very sensitive and that painful decisions will be needed. As the eminent Jew of Portuguese descent, Baruch Spinoza, taught us “There is no hope unmingled with fear, and no fear unmingled with hope”. But time has come to overcome fear and let the hope of peace guide our actions.

The European Union will be your steadfast partner in this endeavour and will assist you in lighting the candle of peace that will shine for many.

I thank for your attention.