

**Remarks by Consul General Rubinstein at  
the Max Rayne Hand in Hand School for Bilingual Education in Jerusalem**

June 28, 2012

Good Evening. I am honored to join with you to celebrate the graduation of the second senior class of the Max Rayne Hand in Hand School for Bilingual Education in Jerusalem. Thank you to Hand in Hand High School Co-Principal Inas Deeb for the kind introduction.

Graduates, you should be proud of your individual accomplishments that have brought you to this point. You should also be proud of all that you do every day in order to break down barriers, in order to work for a peaceful, more secure region.

As the American Consul General here in Jerusalem, I have had the unique opportunity of interacting with people from all over Jerusalem. I have been here for three years, and just as you are about to graduate, I will soon be departing Jerusalem. During my time here, I have seen amazing things – among them, Jerusalemites who work daily to ensure that people are seen for what they stand for instead of being viewed merely by their religion, the color of their skin, their last name, or the language in which they speak. Jerusalem, with its diversity of communities, highlights the need and importance of the Hand in Hand School, both today and in a future in which we hope to see a negotiated two-state solution with Jerusalem at peace. I feel that the mission and people of this school embody the best of Jerusalem, and I am deeply honored to be here today.

Hand in Hand challenges the misbegotten belief that the peoples of this region cannot coexist peacefully. This school, its administration, teachers and students actively promote coexistence, mutual understanding, and respect for others. You have participated in activities and used textbooks that foster positive self-esteem, bilingualism, and mutual respect for diversity among the students. From the earliest grades, you and your classmates worked out the small and large issues of coexistence—and hopefully had some fun along the way.

The U.S. Government is proud to be a supporter of Hand in Hand. Over the years, we have worked together on various projects. I am proud that, through an over \$1 million grant from USAID, over the next three years Hand in Hand will be implementing programs to enhance shared communities and establish additional joint educational frameworks. Through this program, many more people will have the first-hand experience of working together towards common goals.

Graduates, you are the future. As President Obama recently said at a college commencement in the United States, “Never underestimate the power of your example.” He was speaking to graduates of a women’s college, but I believe that his words should resonate with you as well. There will be people who tell you that coexistence is not feasible. I think they are wrong, but you **know** they are wrong. I urge you to remember your experience at Hand in Hand School, the friends you made and the bonds that will stay with you for the rest of your life. By being the best you can be, and setting a positive example for those around you, others will have no other choice than to see each of you as the strong, independent, confident, and respectable people you are.

Your education has been based around a model of mutual respect, but you have gained so much more. Because your education has been bilingual, you have a step up on other graduates when you head to college or into the work force. Because you have worked in and with another culture, you are more adaptable and because your parents, teachers, and administrators have supported you throughout all of this, you are ready to take your next step into the future. But before you do, graduates, I hope you have thanked your parents for this golden opportunity.

To all of the parents here – I would like to thank you for your vision in having your children enroll here at Hand in Hand School. You know that people in this region can coexist in a way that leads to greater prosperity and security for all. The United States supports the endeavor in which you are engaged, just as we work daily in order to achieve a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with an aim to ensure peace, security, and prosperity for this generation and future generations – a solution of which you are an integral part.

To all of the administrators and teachers – thank you for your dedication and your enthusiasm in guiding the next generation. You have done an extraordinary job of bringing two cultures together in a meaningful and constructive way.

On behalf of the American people, I would like to congratulate all of you on your graduation today. We look forward to a continued relationship with Hand in Hand and wish all of the graduates all the best for your future endeavors.