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P.M. AND PRESIDENT ISRAEL STATEMENT AFTER MEETING

RT. HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER: Merci. Thank you, Prime Minister. Thank you for those kind words. Thank you also for all of the hospitality. I would say particularly today we had a very fruitful exchange between members of our cabinet and our teams that I hope will lead to some continued and much more in depth cooperation and collaboration in the years to come.

But I do want to extend my personal thanks to you on behalf, not just of Laureen and myself, but as I said, our entire delegation. We really felt welcome and really have enjoyed every minute of this visit.

Monsieur le premier ministre, nous nous sommes rencontrés chez nous à plusieurs reprises. Il est donc juste que je vous rende maintenant la pareille. Il existe aujourd'hui une grande amitié entre Israël et le Canada. Cette amitié est délibérée, intentionnelle et importante pour les Canadiens et Canadiennes.

The deep friendship between Canada and Israel rests upon strong people to people ties and nearly 25,000 Canadians actually live in Israel, call

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Israel home. And as I mentioned yesterday, nearly 350,000 number Canada's Jewish community, which is the fourth largest in the entire world.

Our friendship also rests upon the firm foundations, as you mentioned, of our shared love of freedom, democracy and justice.

Ainsi, je suis heureux de souligner que comme vous venez de le voir une entente de partenariat stratégique a été signée entre le Canada et Israël.

I'm therefore pleased to note that as you just saw, a strategic partnership agreement has been signed between Canada and Israel. This partnership will cement the goodwill between us, protect and promote the values we share, and lead to greater cooperation in the future.

Aujourd'hui, Israël est aussi l'un des marchés prioritaires du Canada et nos deux pays entretiennent une relation commerciale solide.

In our meetings the Prime Minister and I discussed ways to increase bilateral trade and investment and to create more jobs, growth and prosperity for both Israelis and Canadians.

À cet égard je suis ravi d'annoncer aussi le lancement des négociations visant à moderniser l'accord de libre échange Canada-Israël.

And to that end I'm delighted that we're announcing today as well the launch of negotiations to modernize the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement. This is a long-standing agreement, one of our earliest, but it's also one

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in much need of updating and particularly for our relationship where we see plenty of upside potential.

Le premier ministre et moi avons également été témoins de la signature d'une lettre d'intention en vue de nouveaux partenariats entre l'université Dalhousie et l'université Ben Gurion ici en Israël.

Prime Minister and I also witnessed, as you noted, the signing of a letter of intent for a partnership between Dalhousie University and Ben Gurion University here in Israel. And of course we believe once again, in areas such as knowledge, science and technology, some of the things I discussed both with President Peres as well as Prime Minister Netanyahu, we see great opportunity for collaboration between our two countries in these advanced sectors of our economy.

Of course we also discussed all the issues of regional peace and security. Canada will continue to strongly uphold Israel's right to exist and flourish as an independent Jewish state and to defend herself and her citizens from those who seek her destruction.

Mesdames et Messieurs, la situation dans le monde est aujourd'hui incertaine. C'est pour cette raison que le Canada se compte chanceux d'avoir Israël comme partenaire et ami.

Monsieur le premier ministre, j'espère que la relation entre nos deux pays continuera de se développer au cours des mois et des années à venir.

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My sincere thanks. Once again, Prime Minister, for your friendship, your friendship and Sara's, to myself and Laureen, just to tell you once again how greatly we enjoyed hosting you in our country. We've been so grateful for the kind hospitality you've shown in return on this, our first visit to this historic and magnificent place. And I hope this... we'll always remember it and I hope this will be the beginning of many more such visits.

(applause)

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