Mr Director-General, 
Excellencies, 
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is truly an honour to have been awarded this peace prize named after the great leader and unforgettable friend, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. I would like to thank the Jury, and the man who not only made peace but judged it, Henry Kissinger, as well as the President of Portugal, the President of Côte d'Ivoire, and the Prime Ministers of Senegal and Turkey - thank you for coming to encourage peace.

Upon concluding his visit to Israel, President Houphouët-Boigny told about a young Israeli of whom he had asked: “How is it that the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea which are located on the same longitude and draw their water from the same river, one of them, the Sea of Galilee, is vibrant with life and the other Dead Sea contains death.”

The young Israeli thought for a while and then responded: the Sea of Galilee draws its water from the Jordan River and passes it on; namely a sea that gives and takes. The Dead Sea draws the water and keeps it for itself. A sea that just takes.

The difference between give and take and just take, may become a difference of life and death: the distinction between peace that guarantees life and war that carries death.

In the absence of peace, neighbours reflect – and they, in turn, see in you the source of their agonies: poverty, barrenness, fear, even destruction.

With the advent of peace, your neighbours remain unchanged, but your relations with them can change. You create for yourself, and offer to your neighbour, a life of normalcy, a reduction in costs of belligerency, an economy of growth.
Peace is an attempt to map relations, even before mapping borders.

The Oslo agreement did not draw a permanent map. It mapped a new soul. It created a timetable, an occasion to improve our relations. It promises a climate that, may in the future, enable the marking of secure borders.

For us, led by the Prime Minister Rabin, and serving together, the agreement reflects a moral choice and a political process.

Morally, we have returned to the values of the history of our people. For almost four millennia the Jewish people never ruled, were never tempted to rule, another people. An inclination to dominate the Palestinian people is not just a violation of Palestinian rights, but a contradiction to the Jewish moral heritage. Whoever chooses peace can not ignore the dictum of Isaiah, ‘Never shall a nation lift a sword against another’, – a resounding call which has never been surpassed.

Politically, as neighbours we must look to the future. A ticket to the twenty-first century means an adaptation to a new order. To be strong, you have to refer to the niveau of science, not just to the size of territory. To be well-to-do you will have to refer to the heights of technology, not just to the natural resources. To secure your population from missiles and non-conventional arms you have to turn to political options. There are no anti-nuclear weapons.

Air does not have borders. Water overflows boundaries. Information does not stop at curtains - iron or silk, and science and nature are indivisible, they affect all of us.

Therefore national problems must be handled in a wide framework – at least a regional one. Military threats must be met by broad political agreements.

Territorial integrity and political stability depend on democratic processes. Democracy serves as the best barrier against war; democracy guarantees a market economy.

The Oslo agreement is the first step of an ancient region, full of memories, to come to terms with a new era, full of changes.

When I look at the mountains, I see the peaks from which the great religions sprang. When I look at the valleys, I mourn the tombs of the youngsters who lost their youth, I feel that we have to, that we are capable of, providing the newly born with the noble messages that come from the lofty places, and the earthly peace that should succeed war and oppression.

Let me say a personal word. When I was at school, in a youth village on the way to Jerusalem, we had to travel in armoured buses. We had to endure ambushes from behind. Therefore, I devoted most of my life to making Israel strong. All this time the Palestinians represented in our eyes danger, hostility. The Palestinians probably felt the same way about us. It is hard to forget those emotions, and more difficult to divorce them. But I feel that now is a time for a historic divorce. A divorce from war, hatred, suspicion and terror - a divorce from the producers of pain, waste and bereavement.
I feel that now is the time for peace, for a rendez-vous between the Jewish rebirth and the Arab renaissance, between the realities of a Jewish State and the requirements of the Palestinian people.

The meeting place is small and dense. We must enlarge its potentials. Instead of quarrelling how to divide shortages, let us work together to create new opportunities, to open a new page in a different era, in an era of science, in a region of peace, the prayers answering of an entire world to see a Middle East with the glory of the past and the promise of the future, showing that there are no lost cases, only lost faith.

A new rendez-vous, a recovered faith in a new Middle East. Our aim is not just to have peace in the Middle East, but to build a peaceful Middle East.