*Shalom haverim,*

I’m David Harris, CEO of American Jewish committee, speaking to you from New York.

Let me first of all thank my friends Gerald Steinberg and Olga Deustch at NGO Monitor for inviting our participation in this important conversation that they are having with members of Knesset and other interested parties.

I defer to their expertise on the NGO ecosystem – who they are, how they are funded, how they are connected.

Our work at AJC is largely on the global diplomatic front, particularly with governments of over 100 nations, with which we engage each year.

So, in framing my comments, let me first dial back to 1975 for just a moment, and the UN General Assembly’s adoption of Resolution 3379, the infamous “Zionism is racism” resolution.

It took 16 years until 1991 for that resolution to be repealed. Only the second time, I believe in UN history, that any General Assembly resolution was actually reversed.

But for much of those 16 years, there was a vigorous debate, in which I participated, about just how important that resolution was or was not, and just how much diplomatic capital Israel should or should not expend to try and have that resolution reversed.

We took the positon that it had to be reversed.

For many in Israel, over much of those 16 years, the thought was “leave it alone, it is just another UN resolution. Let us not spend too much time or attach too much importance to it.”

Then I fast forward to 2001 – the Durban Conference – where we really saw the crystallization of what is now commonly referred to as “intersectionality,”

where the groups – particularly that NGO Monitor watches – really came together and managed, tragically, to put their issues on the global agenda

in such a way as to actually destroy the very nature of the conference and lead to the withdrawal of the United States, and in years to come, other countries that disassociated themselves.

One of the lessons that we took from the 1975-1991 experience, and then the 2001 experience, is that we cannot afford to ignore, or underestimate, or pretend that this movement

– largely driven by NGOs but supported by a number of governments like Iran, of course, but others as well –

that somehow they are simply no more than mosquito bites.

That we can afford to move on beyond them.

I think to the contrary.

I think that it is important for us to take on these issues head on. And I also believe it is important that Israel – if I may say so as a lifetime friend of Israel –

put this issue on their diplomatic agendas, not just multilaterally, but bilaterally increasingly.

Because what we are seeing today, at least from our extensive experience, is not just the usual suspects.

I mean, what Iran does, what Pakistan does, what Malaysia does – it is not surprising, however painful it may be. It is not surprising.

And I am not talking about expending capital on those countries, at least not yet. Maybe one day it will be a different story.

,I am talking about a universe of other countries that do recognize Israel’s very right to exist.

that do have bilateral diplomatic relations with Israel that often have energetic and robust ties in a variety of spheres,

and, in the year 2021, are increasingly seeking to expand and to deepen those ties.

As Israel becomes ever more the quintessential 21st century nation, and more and more nations seek access to Israeli knowhow in dozens of spheres

– it is those nations that on the one hand engage with Israel in many many ways –

yet on the other hand, whether out of ignorance, laziness, perhaps diabolical Machiavellian kind of approach, try to play it both ways:

engage with Israel, and yet allow their support in the UN system, or their development and aid assistance, to go to organizations whose very aims are to undermine the state of Israel.

I think it is increasingly important that we engage very directly with those nations, beginning with, of course, Europe.

Not only, but beginning with Europe and within Europe – the 27 member nations of the European Union bloc.

And we make clear both as Israelis and like us – as friends of Israel – that we will no longer go along with this sort of two-pronged game,

where you engage, you support, you celebrate *Yom Ha’atzmaut*, yet on the other hand, for whatever set of reasons, you allow your own support to be used in ways that delegitimize the state of Israel,

that erase Jewish history, as was illustrated just this week at the UN with the latest resolution on Jerusalem.

Or, as we’ve seen elsewhere, that support in any way those that would deny the Jewish people their sovereignty and self-determination.

So that is my basic message.

And we at AJC are more than willing to be the partners of all those who are participating in this discussion, who agree with this basic assumption:

it is time for us to raise this issue on the bilateral agenda and not just multilateral agenda; to make clear that nations are being monitored closely;

and that we will do everything possible to help nations understand that, intentionally or unintentionally, they are undermining the very right of Israel to function equally in the community of nations.

Because of this – as I said ecosystem – of NGOs supported by some governments that are using every instrumentality possible to malign Israel, to isolate Israel, to demonize Israel, and to delegitimize Israel.

So I wish you well in your deliberations and I repeat once again as emphatically as I can:

the American Jewish Committee and our global network are here to assist in any way possible, as longtime – indeed I would say eternal – fiends of the state of Israel and Zionism.