

Board of Governors
November 2024
Opening Board Plenary – November 17, 2024

Minutes

Opening Remarks

Mark Wilf, Chair of the Board, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He thanked everyone for attending, despite the circumstances and the unprecedented challenges the State of Israel and the Jewish people are facing. He thanked both the constituents and the professional staff for their commitment and dedication and for working tirelessly from the very first day of the war and detailed JAFI's main activities these past year. The Board stood for a minute of silence in memory of those who were murdered on and since October 7th, and in memory of the fallen soldiers.

Then Mr. Wilf spoke of what we must do for Jewish communities around the world and help strengthen their resilience, in light of the many antisemitic attacks and anti-Israel sentiments.

Mr. Wilf acknowledged the recent appointment of Mr. Meir Holtz as CEO of Masa and Ms. Idit Nagar as CEO of TechUnity and shared some impressive numbers regarding Masa activities this past year.

Mark Wilf expressed condolences on behalf of the Board to Fred Zimmerman who recently lost his beloved mother, Alice.

Approval of Minutes

Josh Schwarcz presented the minutes of previous Board meetings: February 2024 meeting and May 2024 zoom meeting.

The abovementioned minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.

Extension of the Appointment of the Chair of the Board

Josh Schwarcz explained that usually Board Chairs are elected for four years and said that when Mr. Wilf initially took the role, we agreed upon a three-year term and now, the leadership of JAFI and the constituencies has asked Mark to complete the regular four-year term.

He presented a proposed resolution to extend the appointment accordingly through June 2025, that was approved by the Leadership Nominating Committee as required.

The Board of Governors unanimously approved the resolution.

The Chairman of the Executive

Maj. Gen. Doron Almog welcomed the parents of Omer Shem-Tov who are here with us and spoke about three fallen soldiers, Eitan, Nazar, and Almakam Tarfe z"l, two of them new olim, that fought for the sake of the Jewish people and for the existence of the State of Israel. All three of them represented the unconditional love for the State of Israel.

Maj. Gen. Almog stressed that as long as there are hostages still in the hands of Hamas, our rehabilitation cannot begin. He thanked the Jewish people around the world for standing beside us and helping us assist picking up the pieces. He praised the commitment of our partners and their tireless dedication and enormous trust and support in activating aid mechanism and deliver a clear powerful message that the Jewish people stands with the people of Israel. He elaborated on various activities we were able to carry out, with the assistance of our partners, for assisting Israeli society and at the same time, strengthening Diaspora communities.

He stressed that the Jewish Agency is ready to be part of the rebuilding and rehabilitation and said that we must use our resilience and strength and connection with the Diaspora, to do so. He detailed the main areas in which we must operate such as encouraging large wave of Aliyah or promoting the expansion of borderline kibbutzim, expending the shlichim initiative and assisting Jewish communities worldwide. He also said that we must expend experiences in Israel and connect the young generation.



Maj. Gen. Almog thanked the Jewish Agency leadership and professional staff and concluded by praying for peace, unity among us, cooperation and prayed for the full recovery of the wounded and the safe return of the hostages. A true victory will be achieved, he said, only through building an exemplary society.

A short video was screened on JAFI activities.

The incoming Director General of the Jewish Agency

Yehuda Setton expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve on this significant role. He stressed that the enormous challenges offer more opportunities for building resilient inert-connected network, to lead us to a brighter future.

Mr. Setton detailed three major challenges/fronts – the war in Israel; ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine; threats and rise in violent attacks against Jewish communities. He elaborated on how these affect communities and how it affects Israel and finally undermines our resilience.

He stressed that his vision for the State of Israel and the Jewish people took a drastic turn on October 7 and it is clear that the needs are changed and we have no time to waste. We must be strategically clear and act. Our strategy focuses on two major areas: enabling any Jew to take active role in rebuilding; and ensuring global mutual responsibility through connection, resilience, and security.

Yehuda Setton detailed on the four elements that will enable us to do so: strengthening Israel through Aliyah (bringing some 300,000 olim in the next 5 years); anchoring largescale projects in Israel; Jewish community connection & resilience; and sustainable security worldwide.

He summarized by saying that our mission is not only to provide, but to guide and inspire, and serve as a lighthouse for others. The success is depending on layers of impact – JAFI team; the Jewish people worldwide; and our lay leaders and partners.

Elections

Mark Wilf presented the following elections:

The WZO would like to elect Mr. Arie Abir– as a Board Member in category A (will replace Mr. David Korenfeld who will rotate off the Board); and Ms. Carol Ann-Schwartz - as a Board Member in category A (she will replace Ms. Rhoda Smolow who will rotate off the Board).

The WZO and JFNA would also like to reelect the following Honorary Members: Marlene Post, Richie Pearlstone, Jane Sherman and Carole Solomon.

The nominations were approved by the General Nominating Committee as required.

The Board unanimously approved the nominations.

Strengthening the Partnership with the Druze Community in Israel

Mark Wilf presented Sheykh Mowafaq Tarif, the spiritual leader of the Druze community since 1993 who represents the community's affairs before the state authorities and leads the Druze community in Israel in their struggles to obtain equal rights. He also introduced Mr. Mufid Mari, the first committee member on the Board from the Druze community. Mufid served as Member of the 24th Knesset, He is an IDF reserve officer with the rank of Colonel and he is also the Chair of the MetroWest-Horfish Partnership.

A short film was screened on the partnership with the Druze community.

Sheykh Mowafaq Tarif spoke before the Board. He spoke about the Druze community rushing into battle immediately after the fighting broke out on October 7 and detailed the heavy price paid by the community. Despite the heavy losses, the community has not lost faith and we feel a sense of mission.

However, the Sheykh argued, partnership on the battlefield is not always expressed in the civilian area. The partnership must be complete in all civil aspects – the Sheykh mentioned the housing crisis, lack of sufficient investment in Druze communities and, of course, adherence to the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

He noted that we will not give up our Israeliness and will do everything for the good of the state, but at the same time, the state must reexamine the Nation-State Law and accordingly evaluate the brotherhood and shared values with the Druze community. He thanked the Jewish Agency and the partners for their standing by the Druze community and expressed gratitude for their partnership and support.

Mufid Mari presented himself before the Board and thanked the opportunity. He spoke about the community he comes from, Horfish, from which the community chose not to evacuate, and which has been under fire since October 7. He reviewed his military and then civilian activities for the benefit of the State of Israel and its citizens.

Mr. Mari wished to thank the Jewish community around the world in general and the members of the Board in particular for their efforts to strengthen the state and strengthen national resilience. He said within the Druze community we must strengthen mental resilience, build partnerships with the federations for all Druze localities, and implement programs to strengthen the youth with the pre-military academies.

Mark Wilf presented a proposed resolution on strengthening the partnership with the Druze community:

Whereas since the outbreak of the Iron Swords War, a dozen soldiers and officers from amongst the Druze community have fallen, most of them senior officers; and

Whereas at the end of July 2024 the State of Israel was stunned by the tragedy that befell Majdal Shams and the entire Druze community when twelve innocent boys and girls were murdered during a soccer game as a result of an horrific attack by the terrorist organization Hezbollah and at the end of October, a mother and her son from Shfar'am were killed by a rocket while they were working in an olive grove; and

Whereas the Jewish people stands by our Druze brothers and sisters and the Jewish Agency recognizes the importance of the Druze community and the community's unique place in Israeli society and deeply appreciates the Druze community's standing together with Israel for generations; and

Whereas The Jewish Agency uses all the resources at its disposal, together with its partner organizations and within the framework of the Fund for Victims of Terror, to help the Druze community to recover from the devastating attack and provide immediate relief; and

Whereas in October 2018 the Board of Governors of The Jewish Agency confirmed the commitment of the Jewish Agency to the fundamental principles of the State of Israel as derived from the Declaration of Independence,

Therefore, it is hereby resolved:

1. The Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency calls to strengthen our Druze brothers and sisters and deeply appreciates the historic strategic alliance between the Druze people and the State of Israel.
2. The Board of Governors of The Jewish Agency – who represents the historic partnership between the State of Israel and world Jewry – wish to reaffirm the commitment to the Declaration of Independence and its principles, as an expression of solidarity with the State of Israel and as a recognition of its unique, democratic, and egalitarian nature.
3. The Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency calls on the Knesset to express in legislation the commitment to the Druze community and the full equality of rights to which the Druze citizens of the State of Israel are entitled.

The Board unanimously approved the above resolution.

Solidarity with the Families of the Hostages

Mark Wilf said that since October 7th, we are facing an incomprehensible situation in which our brother and sisters are being held captive by Hamas. He invited Shelly Shem-Tov, the mother of Omer Shem-Tov, who was kidnapped from the Nova music festival and is still in the hands of Hamas.



Ms. Shem-Tov spoke about her and her family's tireless efforts to increase worldwide awareness for the release of all hostages, including her beloved son. She spoke about how her life and that of her family since that terrible day are dedicated solely to the goal of bringing Omar home.

She also said that she prays and speaks to Omer everyday to send him strength and resilience to endure until he returns. She spoke of Omer and called upon the participants to use their voice and to be the voice of the hostages.

The song "Come Back" (Tachzor) was played.

Meeting adjourned.

Minutes: Aviva Shetreet.