

Board of Governors
March 2025
Opening Board Plenary – March 2, 2025

Minutes

Opening Remarks

Mark Wilf, Chair of the Board, opened the meeting by recognizing the ongoing turmoil in Israel and the collective hope for the safe return of hostages. He introduced the theme "The Time is Now," emphasizing the urgency of rebuilding, strengthening, and leading the Jewish world through action. He encouraged participation in strategic discussions at Kiryat Moriyah, where members will help shape the Jewish Agency's updated mission. He also acknowledged the dedication of our partners in supporting Israel, assisting terror victims, aiding businesses, and fostering Jewish connections worldwide.

Mark Wilf highlighted the growing threats to Jewish communities globally, stressing the need for resilience and security. He mentioned the special recognition for Richie Pearlstone, who will receive the Max Fisher award for leadership, and sent heartfelt condolences to the families of Alan Shulman z"l and Gerald "Jerry" Peskind z"l. Wilf reminded attendees of logistical details, including the shift to a digital information portal. He concluded by reinforcing the importance of collective responsibility in shaping Israel's future and strengthening Jewish communities worldwide.

Approval of Minutes

Josh Schwarcz presented the minutes of previous Board meetings: November 2024 meeting and January 2025 zoom meeting.

The abovementioned minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.

Election of Board and Executive Members

Mark Wilf presented the following nominations to the Board:

Ms. Sarene Shanus (JFNA) - Board Member in category B; Ms. Barbara Orvitz (KH) - Associate Member; Mr. Gil Segal (WZO) - Associate Member.

He also presented the following nominations to the Executive:

Jeff Schoenfeld - JFNA (replacing Alisa Doctoroff); David Korenfeld - WZO (replacing Masha Lubelsky); and Sergio Oberlander (KH).

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

The Board unanimously approved the nominations.

Mark Wilf thanked the retiring members and welcomed the newcomers. He also welcomed the new Israeli members of Board committees that were recently appointed: Beni Bitton, the Mayor of Dimona; and Einat Reich.

The Chairperson of the Executive

Chair of the Executive, Maj. Gen. Doron Almog, began his speech by mourning the murder of hostages like Ohad Yahalomi, a dedicated leader who helped disabled residents fulfill their dreams of hiking. The Chair shared personal connections to the tragedy, referencing his own family history and a promise never to leave the weak behind, which he describes as a core value of the Jewish people and a fundamental pillar in building an exemplary society.

Then Chairman Almog highlighted stories of resilience such as 81-year-old Gadi Mozes's determination to rebuild his kibbutz after 482 days in captivity. The Chair emphasized the Jewish Agency's critical mission of rehabilitation, particularly focusing on supporting the youth who carry the psychological scars of war. He spoke of young people from Israel and around the world who continue to demonstrate hope and commitment to building the nation, despite the immense challenges they face.

Looking forward, Doron Almog presented a bold vision for Israel's future, calling for a wave of one million new olim to revitalize the country's demographic and economic landscape. He outlined specific initiatives aimed at reconstruction and growth, from supporting victims of terror to expanding rural areas and economic development. The speech concluded with a powerful message that absolute victory is not defined by military success, but by the ability to create a model society that ensures no one is left behind, emphasizing collective responsibility and the urgent need to bring home all remaining hostages.

Continuing the Struggle for the Return of the Hostages

MS. Dalia Cusnir, a dedicated Jewish Agency professional, and an advocate for justice, spoke before the Board not in her professional capacity, but as a family member, and a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. On October 7th, both of her brothers-in-law, Eitan and Yair Horn, were taken hostage by Hamas. A few weeks ago, Yair was released as part of the hostage deal—but Eitan remains in captivity.

Dalia stressed that this cruel separation is unimaginable and unacceptable. No family should have to endure such agony, and no hostage should be left behind. Dalia spoke of her and the family's unwavering fight to bring the hostages home—because our struggle will not end until every hostage is returned to their family.

Diplomatic and Security Briefing

Maj. Gen. Doron Almog held a conversation with Mr. Yossi Cohen, former Head of the Mossad. Yossi Cohen provided a comprehensive geopolitical overview focusing on Israel's security challenges, particularly regarding Iran. He emphasized that Iran remains Israel's primary strategic threat due to its declared objective of Israel's destruction and its support for regional terror organizations, including Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. Cohen highlighted Iran's international alliances, notably with Russia and China, which bolster its military and financial capabilities. He also referenced past Israeli intelligence efforts that exposed Iran's nuclear ambitions and discussed the importance of ensuring Israel retains the ability to neutralize any existential threats from Iran, ideally with U.S. support.

Regarding Qatar, Cohen acknowledged its complex role in regional diplomacy, particularly in facilitating hostage negotiations. While Israel previously allowed Qatari financial aid to Gaza for humanitarian purposes, he stressed that lessons must be learned from how these funds were ultimately used. Cohen also addressed the broader regional impact of the ongoing war, noting significant changes in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. He asserted that Israel has demonstrated its military strength and resilience, leading to shifts in regional dynamics. Concluding his remarks, Cohen reaffirmed Israel's commitment to self-defense and expressed gratitude for the support of the Jewish diaspora in securing the nation's future.

Spotlight on the Jewish Agency's Activities in the North

Mark Wilf reminded that at the last Board meetings we highlighted and visited the South of Israel. He stressed that today we would now like to share a video showcasing our activities in the North over the past year.

The video screened highlighted the efforts that have provided extensive support to Israeli society, to our beneficiaries, and to our own teams and their families.

Director General's Remarks

In his speech, Director General Yehuda Setton about the cycles of suffering and renewal that have defined Jewish history. He spoke about the reality of witnessing hostages return to their families while also grieving those lost and stressed that this unbearable reality calls for strength, unity, and rebuilding.

Yehuda Setton highlighted the importance of ensuring that the decisions made in the coming days will help us achieve our goals: engaging every Jew in actively rebuilding the country and fostering a sense of global mutual responsibility. Setton underscored that every action and decision taken now



must push the Jewish Agency and the Jewish people forward. One key initiative he introduced was the launch of a digital Aliyah portal.

He then presented the organization's activities across various areas, including expanding the shlichim program worldwide, supporting vulnerable communities and businesses, enhancing JReady operations, strengthening security for Jewish communities in many countries, and partnerships. He praised the progress made so far and emphasized the need to identify the most critical challenges facing the Jewish people, defining the next steps, and remaining agile in adapting to evolving needs to rebuild the country. He concluded by expressing gratitude to the team and to the dedicated partners.

Miscellaneous

Mark Wilf adjourned the meeting and welcomed everyone to attend the next day's strategic discussions.

Minutes: Aviva Shetreet