

**Government Relations Committee
Zoom Meeting
November 4th, 2024**

Members present: Daniel Liwerant – Chair, Seth Greenberg, Victor Asser, Richard Goldstein, Stephen Rosedale, Kimball Taylor, Steven Wernick, Michael Siegal, Mark Levenson.

Members absent: Daniel M. Schydlofsky, Sergio Oberlander.

Professional Staff: Josh Schwarcz, Tali David, Hila Deutsch.

Invitees: Yaron Shavit, Richie Pearlstone, Amira Aharonoviz, Inbar Ruimy, Shiva Beck, Louise Jacobs, Shirel Dagan-Levy.

Summary of Meeting

Danny Liwerant opened the meeting and welcomed the members and invitees.

The minutes of the previous meeting, from March 20th, 2024, were approved.

Josh Schwarcz - Update on Jewish Agency Government Relations

Josh gave a short update regarding recent meetings and initiatives with different members of the Knesset and the government, and emphasized that since October 7th, the government is mainly dealing with the war and nothing else, therefore all of the regular Jewish Agency's government relations work has stopped. Nevertheless, Josh noted that the 2025 budget of the government, will not negatively impact the Jewish Agency's programs. In addition, Josh managed to accompany two MK delegations: a joint delegation with the Knesset and JFNA to New York and New Jersey of 5 Members of Knesset, and a delegation to Paris of 4 Members of Knesset.

Josh also mentioned the Israeli government's historic decision to recognize victims of terror in the Diaspora. Following the decision, the government established a committee headed by the Chairman of the World Zionist Organization, Yaakov Hagoel, and the Director General of the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, Avi Cohen-Scali, and managed by Josh Schwarcz. The Committee began its work and has recognized dozens of victims of antisemitic murders since the establishment of the state.

Furthermore, Josh shared with the committee that a joint committee meeting, initiated by the Jewish Agency, of the Education, Culture and Sports Committee (chaired by MK Yosef Taieb, Shas) and the Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs (chaired by MK Oded Forer, Israel Beitenu) was held on the issue of comparing Shinshinim budgeting disparities. Shinshinim in Israel are budgeted by the Government, but Shinshinim abroad are not. The Committees called on the Government to fund this important activity.

In addition, Josh mentioned that Youth Futures was declared a National Initiative for the rehabilitation of Israel's children at the President's Residence in Jerusalem, officiated by President Isaac Herzog, in the presence of the Minister of Education, Minister of the Negev, Galilee and National Resilience, Chairman of the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel, the CEO of Mifal HaPaysis – Israel National Lottery, several Mayors, donors and more.

Discussion:

Mark Levenson offered to help with Shinshinim activities overseas if needed and inquired about the possibility of arranging a committee meeting with Israeli government officials and Knesset members. Additionally, Danny Liwerant and Michael Siegal both voiced concerns about the ability of the Diaspora Jewish community to make their voices heard, citing the lack of meetings with Israeli government representatives.

Update on Voice of the People - The President's Initiative for a Shared Jewish Future

The Voice of the People, a joint subsidiary of the Jewish Agency and WZO, an initiative of President Herzog, is a global network of proactive Jewish leaders committed to driving positive change through creative solutions, ensuring the continuity, and thriving future of the Jewish people. Amira Ahronoviz, the Chair, and Shirel Dagan Levy, the CEO, gave the committee an update regarding the initiative, including its agenda and mission, the structure, goals, applications process and more.

The initiative is supported by a network and experts, a council of 150 diverse members who will work together over a two-year period to tackle immediate and long-term challenges facing Jewish people through collaboration, innovation, and collective action. The council members were selected from among 1,000 candidates and will be divided into ten discussion groups focusing on selected topics.

Closing Remarks

Danny thanked the members and invitees and closed the committee.

Summary: Hila Deutsch