

## **German-Israeli Intergovernmental Consultations**

### **Joint Statement**

(Jerusalem, 25 February 2014)

On 25 February 2014, the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Israel held the fifth round of intergovernmental consultations in Jerusalem. Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu chaired the consultations. They noted with satisfaction the progress made in the relations between the states since the last consultations held in Berlin, 6 December 2012. Both Governments have decided to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, a decision which reflects the unique relationship between Israel and Germany.

Both Governments are determined to further strengthen these relations by expanding their joint work in a wide range of areas.

The discussions reflected the broad range and depth of the cooperation between Germany and Israel. Both sides reiterated their shared aim to further enhance the unique relationship and close ties between the two states. This cooperation looks towards the future, while recognizing Germany's awareness of its historic responsibility towards Israel. Both sides agreed that the preservation of the memory of the Shoah for future generations continues to be a pillar of their relationship. Germany emphasized its commitment and special responsibility to Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and to its security. Both sides expressed their hope for the peaceful coexistence of Israel with its neighbors. In this context they reaffirmed their commitment to work together towards a stabilization of the region and peaceful resolutions of conflicts. They reiterated their strong commitment to human rights and to the fight against all forms of anti-Semitism and racism; they also strongly reaffirmed that any challenge to the right of the State of Israel to exist is unacceptable. Both sides reaffirmed that the common values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law are the solid foundation for the partnership between both states.

Both sides welcomed the continuously growing cooperation and partnership between both societies and especially the mutual interest between the young people in both countries. Both Governments will continue to promote and elaborate dialogue in the strategic, economic, research and development areas and support the strengthening of the relations between the young generations in Israel and Germany.

**The following Government members took part in the consultations:**

**On the German side:** Federal Chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel; Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier; Federal Minister of the Interior, Dr. Thomas de Maizière; Federal Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection, Mr. Heiko Maas; Federal Minister of Finance, Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble; Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ms. Andrea Nahles; Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Mr. Christian Schmidt; Federal Minister of Defence, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen; Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Ms. Manuela Schwesig; Federal Minister of Health, Mr. Hermann Gröhe; Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, Mr. Alexander Dobrindt; Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Ms. Barbara Hendricks; Federal Minister of Education and Research, Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka; Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, Dr. Gerd Müller; Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor, Dr. Helge Braun; and Minister of State in the Federal Chancellery and Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Prof. Monika Grütters.

**On the Israeli side:** Prime Minister Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Avigdor Lieberman; Minister of Defense, Mr. Moshe Ya'alon; Minister of Finance, Mr. Yair Lapid; Minister of Economy, Mr. Naftali Bennett; Minister of Justice, Ms. Tzipi Livni; Minister of Intelligence, Mr. Yuval Steinitz; Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Gideon Sa'ar; Minister of National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Resources, Mr. Silvan Shalom; Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Yair Shamir; Minister of Science Technology and Space, Mr. Yaakov Perry; Minister of Education, Rabbi Shai Piron; Minister of Culture and Sport, Ms. Limor Livnat; Minister of Transport and Road Safety, Mr. Yisrael Katz; Minister of Health, Ms. Yael German; Minister of Senior Citizens, Mr. Uri Orbach; Minister of Welfare and Social Services, Mr. Meir Cohen; Minister of Environmental Protection, Mr. Amir Peretz; Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ze'ev Elkin; Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Ofir Akunis; Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein.

## **The Intergovernmental consultations focused on the following topics:**

### **Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Israel and Germany in 2015**

Following the joint decision of December 2012 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Germany during the course of 2015, both Governments have taken concrete steps to realize this goal. The national Points of Contact who were designated in the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs have been exploring joint projects. All relevant Ministries are involved in the preparation process, and partners from the spheres of science, culture and civil society have been invited to participate in the planned activities. Both governments reiterated their commitment to allocate budgetary funds for activities in the jubilee year.

Several ministries presented bilateral projects to mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two states.

During the consultations both Heads of Government agreed on the logo which will be used by both sides for all activities and events throughout 2015.

### **International Development Cooperation**

The Governments are strongly committed to the global agenda for sustainable development, eradication of poverty and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The Governments welcomed the signing of the joint declaration of intent on the expansion of Israeli-German International Development Cooperation today and expressed satisfaction at the success of the ongoing partnerships in Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya. Germany and Israel are committed to further implementing the Africa Initiative, as agreed upon by Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chancellor Merkel in December 2012, and to expanding their development cooperation to additional partner states. Both sides highlighted the importance of the close contacts and the annual Development Dialogue between MASHAV and BMZ.

### **Bilateral Legal Cooperation**

In light of the common democratic principles upon which the judicial systems of Israel and Germany are founded, and the common challenges they face, the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection of Germany and the Ministry of Justice of Israel commended the fruitful bilateral legal cooperation between the two states, particularly under the 22 August 1989 agreement between the ministries. They expressed a shared desire to continue to build close cooperation on issues of common interest. To mark the

50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two states, the ministries expressed their intention to organize a justice conference at the ministerial level in Berlin. The conference will provide a forum for high-level dialogue and exchange on professional issues, and emphasize the special relationship between the two ministries.

## **Defence**

The Ministers of Defence will continue to improve existing defence ties and to foster close cooperation between both countries. This will be a mutually beneficial and trustful relationship which is based on true partnership and operational experience, facilitated further by our respective technological and industrial infrastructure. The defence establishments will continue their dialogue and cooperation in the face of shared threats and concerns, regionally and globally, in order to promote security in a way that will serve the mutual long-term interests of Israel and Germany.

## **Trade and Economic Cooperation**

Based on the solid foundation of actively pursued pragmatic cooperation in the field of trade and economic development, the bilateral relations between the states have reached an advanced stage of long-term partnership at many levels. The Governments will work on expanding and diversifying the trade flows between the parties. The Israeli side noted that Israeli companies have developed innovative solutions in ITC, cyber-defense, agro-technology, HLS, new media and other hi-tech sectors that are potentially suitable for the German market. The Governments noted the importance of creating partnerships between the respective business communities in order to enhance bilateral trade and economic relations. In light of this importance, both Governments attribute particular importance to innovation and high value-adding industries. The Governments have invited industries and companies to collaborate in joint initiatives such as technological parks and other investment opportunities in order to create new platforms for entrepreneurship and innovation in both markets.

Both sides agreed that a "German-Israel Innovation Day" will be held in 2015 , with the active participation of both the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the Israeli Minister of Economy. The event is to be held at a suitable venue in Tel Aviv with the participation of high-ranking government officials and business leaders from Israel and Germany. The goal behind this event is to emphasize to the German business community the potential in cooperating with Israeli bodies and to highlight the ways in which both economies complement one another, as well as the advantages that may be gained through joint cooperation. Both Ministers made reference to the previous Innovation Day held at the BMWi in Berlin on December 6,

2010. The event attracted more than 300 guests from the business communities of both states and generated concrete business cooperation between participating companies.

The German Federal Minister of Education and Research and the Israeli Minister of Economy agreed to intensify the bilateral cooperation in industrial research and in the area of vocational training. The Governments intend to develop new fields of technology as well as to strengthen their joint participation in the EU-Framework Program “Horizon 2020” and in EUREKA.

## **Energy**

The energy sectors both in Germany and Israel continue to undergo significant transformation. Ensuring a high level of supply security and maintaining reasonable prices, while integrating climate protection objectives, requires market-based solutions and technological innovation. Both Governments intend to strengthen their fruitful dialogue and successful cooperation in this field and continue to encourage German and Israeli companies and research institutions to cooperate.

## **Environmental Protection**

The Governments seek to further strengthen the close cooperation between the states in environmental protection, particularly in fields such as waste management, green building and mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, including in ways which might benefit states of the region, thus contributing to peace and stability in the Middle East.

## **Agriculture**

Both Governments stated that cooperation between the two states in the agricultural sector had greatly intensified since the last intergovernmental consultations and the signing of the Agreement on Scientific-Technical Cooperation in the Area of Research on Agriculture and Nutrition in 2012. They agreed to jointly promote innovations in agriculture that were closely linked to the phenomena of worldwide climate change. Shortly after the signing of the Agreement, the implementation phase began. A number of projects were identified based on common fields of scientific interest. The first joint scientific projects will start in 2014. The Governments emphasized their interest in joint twinning projects and highlighted the positive results of the ongoing twinning project for rural development and agro-tourism, which is a trilateral project between Italy, Germany and Israel. The possibility of working together in agricultural projects in Africa is also being considered.

## **Preserving and Refurbishing the "White City" in Tel Aviv**

The Governments recognize that the "White City" in Tel Aviv is the world's largest collection of Bauhaus architecture, built by exiled Jewish-German architects, and plays an important role in joint German-Israeli history. The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo will cooperate on the study, documentation and preservation of Bauhaus buildings in Tel Aviv.

## **Scientific and Technological Research**

The Governments reaffirmed their long-standing successful cooperation in scientific research and emphasized their willingness to strengthen this cooperation. On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Federal Minister of Education and Research and the Israeli Minister of Science, Technology and Space have agreed to hold the second German-Israeli Research Forum in 2015. The objective is to further develop the already successful research cooperation. The Forum will be held in Israel. Both sides will decide on the thematic focus areas to be discussed at the Forum. Both Ministers stressed the excellence of the fruitful scientific cooperation between Germany and Israel and the yield from innovative projects, and agreed to intensify the bilateral cooperation of their Ministries in the field of cancer research by expanding the program's scope.

## **Transport**

The Governments agreed to continue to enhance their cooperation in the field of rail transport. The Federal Government will encourage German consultancy firms and infrastructure companies to get involved in rail transport projects in Israel.

Electric mobility and innovations for sustainable transport systems: The Governments emphasized that alternative fuels and drivetrains, including electric mobility, play a major part in developing sustainable mobility for the future. For this reason, as part of existing agreements, the intensive dialogue on relevant strategies, research and business activities is to be continued.

The Governments, through their respective Ministers of Transport, have decided to promote drawing up an agreement based on mutual recognition, for the purpose of reciprocity of driving licenses.

## **The Ghetto Pension Law**

Both Governments underlined the importance of a quick solution regarding the question of retroactive payments of pensions from labor in a ghetto. Given the age of the eligible individuals and the time that has already elapsed, the Federal Government announced its firm intention to submit a bill to the Bundestag as soon as possible, which would make these retroactive pension payments possible from July 1997. Both Governments expressed their confidence that there is a common understanding that survivors who worked in a ghetto will receive full recognition under the social insurance law as soon as possible.

## **Social Affairs**

The Governments, through their respective Ministers of Social Affairs, have decided that a mutual cooperation and best practices exchange be made by the Ministries' senior professional officials.

## **Health**

The Governments, through their respective Ministries of Health have decided on mutual cooperation and best practices exchange on health issues to be made by the Ministries' senior professional officials.

## **Education and Youth Exchange**

The encounters of young people from Germany and Israel are a central aspect of German-Israeli relations. The youth exchange assists in structuring a foundation of common values, leading to mutual respect and better understanding between the young generations of both states.

The close cooperation between the Coordination Center for German-Israeli Youth Exchange, ConAct, and the Israel Youth Exchange Authority, which is based on the Memorandum of Understanding between the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Ministry of Education regarding youth exchange dating from 2011, led to approximately 300 encounters in 2013 involving close to 6.000 young people and specialists in youth welfare service in the non-formal education exchange. The Israel Youth Exchange Authority and ConAct will establish a bilateral steering committee to formulate a list of joint projects and unique events to be held in 2015 to mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel.

With a view to the young peoples' increased interest in learning German, the Israeli government stated that it would examine the introduction of German as an optional

subject at specific Israeli high schools beginning in 2015. Both states will explore the possibility of promoting the learning of the German language in Israeli schools by establishing academic teacher training programs for German-language teaching, in cooperation with the German-designated authority and Israeli universities.

The Governments welcomed the progress made in the work of the German-Israeli Textbook Commission. They look forward to the publication of the Commission's joint recommendations for textbooks, scheduled for 2015, and called for their implementation through appropriate national means.

Both states agreed to cooperate in the field of educational technology by exchanging information and experiences to improve education and teacher training in the respective school systems, and signed a specific Joint Declaration on this matter.

### **Volunteer Services**

For more than 50 years, volunteer services have played and continue to play a central role in German-Israeli relations. The fact that Israel is among the top-ranking states in terms of young German volunteers is a strong sign which encourages both Governments to explore further possibilities to strengthen their cooperation in this field.

### **Working Holiday Program**

The Governments have decided to launch a Working Holiday Program. This new program will allow young people aged 18 to 30 to spend longer periods of time in the respective states while supporting themselves through work, and will help enhance the people-to-people relations between the states.

### **Senior Citizens**

Against the backdrop of demographic change and the challenges of ageing societies, German-Israeli cooperation in the field of senior citizen policy is based on the desire to have experts regularly exchange their views regarding innovative approaches and successful policies, for inter-generational projects, policy at the local level, old age housing and utilizing the potential of elderly people for the benefit of society. A bilateral working group, which meets at regular intervals, is to have in-depth discussions on topics of mutual interest concerning senior citizen policy and, where applicable, formulate proposals on joint projects.

### **Consular Assistance**

**Israel accepted the** German offer to provide consular assistance through its worldwide consular network to Israeli nationals in emergency situations in third states where Israel has no diplomatic or consular representation at the relevant time. Points of Contact in the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs have been designated to coordinate and process individual assistance requests.

### **Cyber Security**

The Governments seek to further strengthen their cooperation on cyber security and combatting cyber-crime, and to expand knowledge, understanding and expertise on cyber security from technological, strategic, social, international and legal perspectives. They will cooperate to the greatest extent possible in order to create a desirable situation in which potential interference with the authenticity, integrity and availability of data or any other harm to the participants in cyberspace is reduced to a tolerable degree.

### **Identity Security**

Germany and Israel share the view that the use of biometrics can play an important role in securing citizens' identities. In particular, state-of-the-art identity documents, such as the electronic passport, can be securely linked to the legitimate holder by biometric identifiers. The sides have agreed to continue to intensify talks at the working level to look into possible solutions for online ID verification.

### **Sport**

The Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sport confirmed their good and close cooperation. Germany welcomed the Israeli proposal to sign a joint declaration on cooperation in sport, acknowledging the role of sport in the rapprochement of the two states.

### **Culture**

The Governments underlined their commitment to strengthen cultural activities and initiatives, which will help to further deepen mutual understanding and cooperation between both societies. They emphasized their willingness to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel with new ideas and projects which will extend into the future of the two states.

The Governments agreed to establish a German-Israeli translator's award starting in 2015. The prize will be awarded every two years and will honor outstanding translations

published during the last five years in the field of fiction and non-fiction literature from Hebrew into German and from German into Hebrew. The Governments agreed that the National Libraries of Germany and Israel will cooperate in sponsoring new digitization projects with regard to common cultural aspects. This will advance the accessibility of the literary and cultural Jewish heritage in Germany. After conducting a thorough inventory of available archival material and resources, both libraries will finalize joint projects in this area.

### **Better Regulation**

The Governments both consider better regulation an important policy goal and will further cooperation and exchange of best practices, including in simplifying regulation in the field of conducting business and reducing the bureaucratic burdens on citizens in this field.

### **Conclusion**

The Governments reiterated the great importance they attribute to the close ties and continuous interaction between the Governments and agreed to conduct a Government to Government (G2G) meeting during the course of 2015 and look forward to them as one of the major events marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two states.