Resolution EC 170910 -2

Western Wall and Conversion Law:
Call for Unity among all Jews and Mutual Respect

The Executive Committee of the World Jewish Congress, meeting in London on September 11, 2017,

NOTES that the Western Wall (Kotel) is the last standing structure comprising part of the ancient Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. It thus forms a central part of Jewish history and holds deep significance for all Jews, regardless of religious practice, orientation, or gender;

STRONGLY SUPPORTS the Israeli Government’s past agreement to create an official space for egalitarian worship at the Kotel, with joint oversight by all streams of Judaism;

LAMENTS the government’s recent decision to suspend the execution of that agreement in order to find an alternative, and the divisiveness and despair that have arisen as a result of that decision;

FURTHER LAMENTS the Israeli government’s decision to support a conversion bill in the Knesset that aims to delegitimize conversions to Judaism in Israel conducted otherwise than by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, thereby revoking the practice of state recognition of Orthodox conversions through independent Orthodox rabbinical courts and the right of Reform and Masorti (Conservative) converts to register in the Interior Ministry as Jewish, and the divisiveness and despair that have arisen as a result of that decision;

CALLS UPON the Israeli government to urgently work toward finding solutions to these issues in the spirit of tolerance, respect, and accommodation, and, importantly, in the spirit of Israel’s Proclamation of Independence, which committed the State of Israel to “guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture”;

URGES productive dialogue between Israel and Diaspora communities in order to engender mutual understanding and ensure that Israel continues to fulfill its Zionist goal as the national home for all Jewish people and continue the quest for a solution in the interests of the Jewish people;

RECOGNIZES AND ACKNOWLEDGES the valid concerns about these decisions of the Israeli government, but urges that the resulting anger and deep disappointment be channeled into positive and constructive dialogue, which attempts to resolve these issues for the benefit of Israel and the Jewish People and holds itself ready to assist in this vitally important project.

ADOPTED BY THE WJC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, MEETING IN LONDON ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2017