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EURO-ASIAN JEWISH CONGRESS **January 2008 – January 2009**

Ongoing Activities

EAJC's priority is to defend the rights and legitimate interests of the Jewish people; to promote community interests and needs; and also to officially represent, together with Jewish organizations and associations of the Euro-Asian region, their interests toward regional and national governments and international organizations. During this year as in all previous years EAJC leaders were in constant negotiations with governmental authorities of the region on different issues arising in the life of the Jewish Communities. EAJC Secretary General Mikhail Chlenov regularly participated in the meetings and consultations held by the Russian Ministry of Regional Development, the Russian Council of Federation, and the Coordinating Council of Russian National Cultural Autonomies.

Despite some budgetary problems the EAJC-WJC Committee for Anti-Semitism monitoring, expert assessment and counteraction continued its operation. During the year the Committee issued and distributed monthly monitoring and analysis on Anti-Semitic acts and tendencies (available on the EAJC web site - www.eajc.org).

In January 2008, on the basis of monitoring by the Expert group on problems of Anti-Semitism under the World Jewish Congress (WJC) FSU Committee an analytical report was prepared to sum up the year 2007: 'On the main tendencies of anti-Semitic acts in Australia and Euro-Asian states' (compiling editor – EAJC General Council member Vyacheslav Likhachev). It contained reports on expressions of anti-Semitism in Australia, Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, New Zealand, Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Japan. The report was published in English and Russian.

The main objective of the EAJC Interfaith Dialog program is to reduce the global tension and to oppose to "modern" theories of the inevitability of inter-civilization wars.

EAJC executes a number of Community oriented programs including small communities support and educational programs.

For several years now EAJC has offered to the Jewish communities of Eurasia the project 'Tolerance - Lessons of the Holocaust' whose operation is not only for those states where there are interethnic conflicts, but also for ones which already strive to preserve peace and good neighborhood relations. The aim of the program is the education of responsible citizens open to learning about the religions, traditions and cultures of other people. One of the programs concerns introducing the topic of the Holocaust into the curricula of secondary non-Jewish schools in the FSU.

On May 18-19, 2008, the eighth contest of schoolchildren's papers 'History and Lessons of the Holocaust' was organized in Kiev (Ukraine) by the Ukrainian center of Holocaust history studies, financially supported by the EAJC. 33 pupils from various Ukrainian cities took part in the contest; their papers were selected, reviewed, and approved for defense by the contest jury, comprising of leading historians and methodologists, including: EAJC General Council member, director of the Ukrainian center of Holocaust history studies, Dr. Anatoly Podolsky; executive secretary of the Babi Yar public committee Vitaly Nakhmanovitch; and others.

Traditionally, the EAJC supported the International School on the Holocaust, taking place in Brest (Belarus) in June 2008.

Another program aimed at developing the EAJC's interethnic and inter-confessional dialogues, traditionally given significant attention, is the international interethnic children's summer camp Roots of Tolerance. Its concept is unique: not only do the participating teenagers from different national communities get to know the national traditions of their peers, but they actually live each day following a different tradition.

The first session of the camp took place in Odessa (Ukraine) on August 6-26, 2008. 150 children took part in the camp from 13 national communities of Ukraine (Armenian, Crimean-Tatar, Polish, Jewish, Lithuanian, Russian, Greek, Hungarian, Moldovan, etc.). 33 teachers from 12 national communities of Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, worked as counselors. The director of the camp was Sergey Kharakhu, coordinator of the Tolerance Club in Lvov, supported by the EAJC and the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine.

On August 13th, an action was held at the camp, called "Let Us Protect the Children of South Ossetia, Georgia, and Russia", aimed to attract the attention of politicians and the general public to the suffering of refugee children, and to show support and compassion for all victims of the war. During the event, children drew messages to the presidents of Georgia and Russia, Mikhail Saakashvili and Dmitry Medvedev. The messages

were officially referred to the Russian and Georgian consulates in Odessa.

Throughout 2008 the Congress with active participation of its president Alexander Mashkevich was involved in helping solve the problem which has existed between the Breslov World Center (Israel) and the Chance enterprise (Ukraine) since 2002. As a result of this almost-six-year-old conflict, the following property of the Breslov World Center in Uman (Ukraine) was arrested by court order: the grave of Rabbi Nakhman, which is a pilgrimage shrine for Breslov Hasidim, and the building of the largest synagogue in Europe, still under construction. Interference on the part of the EAJC and financial support organized by Alexander Mashkevich led in late August of 2008 to an out-of-court settlement between the parties, and the process of liberating the aforementioned property has begun.

Limmud FSU continued its successful operation in the region and as a co-founders of Limmud FSU EAJC participated in its conferences.

EAJC runs sufficiently large publishing program which includes this year the annual Euro-Asian Year Book, annual brochure on basic tendencies of the Anti-Semitism in the region, "Roots" almanac and "Children of Abraham" non-fiction book.

EAJC ongoing programs include Jewish academic studies and field investigations. Within the frameworks of this program EAJC supports 'Sefer' Center of the Jewish Academic Studies, summer field schools and expeditions and 'Project Judaica' publishing program.

The main and the most shocking event of the subject period was and still is the military conflict in Georgia/South Ossetia. EAJC concentrated all efforts to provide whatever possible assistance to the refugees and those who stayed in the area of the military conflict from both sides. According to different data, there were approximately 12 to 20 Jewish families in South Ossetia before the military actions broke out. They all resided in Tskhinvali. Chairman of the Vladikavkaz Jewish community Mark Petrushansky states that at present the fate of only 5 of them is known as they are refugees in Vladikavkaz.

The town of Gori suffered the bombardments and there is much destruction (approximately 10-15% of residential properties are damaged) and victims among the civilians. Before the military actions started in Gori there were about 80 Jewish (Sephardi and Ashkenazi) families and about 120 people were registered by Hesed.

Key Activities

January 27-29, Jerusalem EAJC participated in WJC Governing Board. More than 130 delegates and observers attended the event, among them the delegation of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) with the EAJC President Alexander Machkevitch as its head. The delegation consisted of EAJC Vice-President Mark Shabad, EAJC Secretary General Mikhail Chlenov, EAJC General Council Chairman Joseph Zisels, EAJC General Council members Eugenia L'vova (Saint-Petersburgh, Russia), Boris Gersten (Belarus), Jemal Ajiashvili (Georgia), Andrey Kozhar (Slovenia) and others. A.Machkevitch participated in the previous day's session of the WJC Steering Committee.

February 4, Moscow - The novel 'Man from Babylon' was presented in the Russian Federal Agency of Culture and Cinematography. The author is Guram Batiashvili, the famous prose and play-writer, Euro-Asian Congress (EAJC) General Council member, editor-in-chief of the 'Menora' newspaper.

February 13, Tbilisi - A joint diplomatic mission of Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) headed by Alexander Machkevitch and Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations headed by Malcolm Hoenlein started its work in Tbilisi. For the first time more than one hundred Jewish leaders from Eurasia and America visited Georgia. The delegation laid a wreath to the memorial of heroes who fought for Georgian independence.

Joseph Zisels led several sessions of EAJC General Council, where the leaders exchanged opinions on the main issues of Jewish life in the Eurasian countries, paying special attention to the problem of Ashkenazi synagogue in Tbilisi. Georgian leaders promised to restore its status. On the joint session of General Council and American leaders the EAJC Secretary General Mikhail Chlenov awarded EAJC medals and diplomas to Guram Batiashvili and rabbi Ariel Levin for their contribution to the development of Jewish life in Georgia.

Intense program included meetings with President Mikhail Saakashvili who, to the mutual joy, declared that his personal hero is David Ben-Gurion and that he feels himself at home in Israel; Speaker of the Parliament Nino Burdzhaneladze who recalled the letter of 18 Georgian Jews, which triggered repatriation of Jews from the former USSR; Prime minister Lado Gurgenidze and major ministers of his cabinet: conflict settlement minister Teimuri Yakobashvili, ministers of foreign affairs, defense, economic growth, energy, Euro-Atlantic integration, education; chairmen of the committees of the Georgian Parliament, ombudsman Sozar Subari. The meetings professed the love of the Georgians to the Jews who inhabit Georgia for more than 26 centuries.

Special attention was paid to the meetings with Patriarch of Georgia Elijah II and the USA Ambassador to Georgia John Teft. EAJC Secretary General Mikhail Chlenov presided and the enormous achievements of the Patriarch in maintaining peace in Georgian society.

February 26 - Jerusalem M.Chlenov spoke at the plenary session of the Global Forum on Anti-Semitism and had negotiations with the foundation "Keren Hayesod". Together with J.Zissels he took part in the JAFI Governing Board meeting, where he made a report on the state of Jewish communities on the post-Soviet territories. Peter Stegny, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Russia to Israel, also spoke at the meeting.

Chlenov took part in the presentation of the "Children of Abraham" book, published by the DAAT/Znanie publishing house (Moscow-Jerusalem) with the support of American Jewish Committee and Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC).

The book tells about the beginnings of confrontation between the Moslems and the Jews, about the "Golden Age" of agreement and cooperation which turned into the long history of hatred and animosity of two peoples and religions. "Children of Abraham" calls to search for ways of mutual understanding and reconciliation of the followers of the two antagonistic religions, both of which were founded by their mutual ancestor, Abraham.

April 9, Jerusalem - Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) Secretary General Mikhail Chlenov and the EAJC General Council Chairman Joseph Zisels took part in the International Conference of Experts on the subject 'Russia, Middle East, and the Issues of Islam'.

The Conference aims at uniting leading experts in the fields of Russian and Israeli politics, political Islam and international research in security, with prominent statesmen and practicing experts from Russia, Israel, and the USA.

The Conference was organized by the former Ambassador of Israel to the Ukraine and the Russian Federation Tzvi Magen, the Institute for Eurasian studies (IES) affiliated with Interdisciplinary Centre (Gertzlia) chairman, and Nathan Shcharansky, the Institute for Strategy Research under the Shalem Center (Jerusalem) Board Chairman.

April 11, Moscow The American Jewish Committee (AJC) delegation led by David Harris arrived to Moscow to meet the leaders of the Jewish organizations and the statesmen of the Russian Federation.

American Jewish Committee is one of the most influential organizations both in the USA and abroad. It also has numerous branches in different countries.

The dinner given by the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) Secretary General prof. Mikhail Chlenov to honor the delegation was attended by the leaders of Russian and Moscow Jewish organizations and the representatives of the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund which is very active in the former USSR. M.Chlenov has been a member of its Expert Council for several years now.

David Harris spoke about aims of his visits to the countries of Eastern Europe and CIS, then he minutely discussed topics of his conversations with the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and stressed that Moscow meetings with the EAJC leaders have become a good tradition and are unquestionably fruitful.

During the meeting the participants exchanged opinions on the current situation, defined the lines of cooperation. The AJC Executive Director Sam Klinger stressed that in the nearest future a new branch of the American Jewish Committee can be opened - in Moscow, to allow for a closer cooperation among the Jewish organizations

April 29 - May 3, Washington DC -The 15th International conference of Jewish leaders was held as a part of annual convocation of American Jewish Committee on April 29 - May 3. AJC, which counts more than hundred years, is one of the leading American Jewish organizations and held its yearly events in form of a large international forum organizing plenary sessions and section meetings inviting prominent active politicians from every part of the world. Official opening of the conference was marked by the speech of the US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice, and at the gala reception in honor of Israel's 60th anniversary there spoke Prime Minister of France François Fillon and Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The list of participants of this conference included hundreds of Jewish representatives from 47 countries. The largest delegations were from the USA, Canada, Israel, and Germany. Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) delegation with EAJC General Council President Joseph Zissels as its head consisted of the representatives of Jewish organizations and communities of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus', Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and the Ukraine.

Intense week-long program reflected urgent problems of relations between the Jewish Diaspora and the state of Israel, modern challenges to the construction of Jewish life in different countries, memorial events of the Holocaust, approaches to interfaith dialogue and other vital problems.

May 13, Jerusalem - a Presidents conference organized by President of Israel Shimon Peres and timed to the 60th anniversary of Israel's independence was opened in Jerusalem in Palace of Congresses ("Binyaney a-Uma"). This is the most imposing conference in Israel's history and it gathered in Jerusalem tens of state and government heads, leaders of world business, Nobel prizewinners, scientists and artists.

13 leaders of American and European states arrived to take part in the conference, with the USA President George Bush, President of France Nicolas Sarkozy, President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili, former President of the Ukraine Leonid Kuchma, former president of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev, former Prime Minister of Great Britain and envoy of the International Quartet in the Middle East Tony Blair, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Joschka Fischer, Federation Council of the Russian Federation Chairman Sergey Mironov, media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, former USA State Secretary Henry Kissinger, President of the Ukraine Victor Yushchenko, President of Poland Lech Kachinsky, Nobel prizewinner and former leader of Czechoslovakia Vatslav Gavel, Nobel prizewinner Eli Vizel, and other high-ranking guests.

A delegation of Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) led by Alexander Machkevitch and EAJC Secretary General Mikhail Chlenov and EAJC General Council Chairman Joseph Zissels took part in the Presidents conference work.

June 17, Washington DC - An honorary "Torch of Liberty" Award was presented to the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) President Alexander Machkevitch on the extended session of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCJS) Board of Directors in Washington. The award is a recognition of EAJC President's role in revival of Jewish life in Eurasia and his participation in international movements for the rights of the Jews from the former USSR.

The award was presented by NCSJ President Edward Robin and Executive Director Mark Levin in the presence of the NJSC Board, leaders of the major Jewish organizations of the USA, and the EAJC delegation.

June 23, Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) Secretary General prof. Michael Chlenov visited Polish Jewish community which is an associated EAJC member.

At the international conference "Modern Jewish Culture: the Common and the Different", which was organized by the Wroclaw State University and the Oxford Lipman Library in Wroclaw, M.Chlenov delivered a paper "Types of Jewish Identity". Then he met chief rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich to discuss EAJC Eastern European politics in the Jewish communities, conditions and problems of the Polish Jewry, and prospects for the future collaboration. In Krakov M.Chlenov took part in the official opening of the annual Europe festival of the Jewish culture which is held in a different city each year.

EAJC Secretary General finished his trip in Kaliningrad where he met the leader of local Jewish community Victor Shapiro to discuss regional specifics and scrutinize in detail the possibilities offered by RF federal law "On national-cultural autonomy" for local communities.

June 29, Kazakhstan - The IV International Festival of Children and Youth Art "Freilehe Kinder" was held in Karaganda, Republic of Kazakhstan. It was organized by Jewish Organizations of Kazakhstan Association "Mitzvah" supported by American Joint Distribution Committee.

The festival gathered more than 200 participants from the CIS countries and demonstrated their high professional level.

The "Mitzvah" Chairman, Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) General Council member Alexander Baron said that the international festival "Freilehe Kinder" acquired a permanent ground in Kazakhstan and is an essential part of the EAJC program of extending tolerance among the youth.

August 17-24, Chernovtsy (Ukraine) - A Week of Jewish History and Culture of Bukovina was held in Chernovtsy. The program of the Week, dedicated to the 600 anniversary of the town, was developed by the Association of Jewish organizations and communities - the Vaad of the Ukraine with the support of Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC).

The Week of Jewish History and Culture coincided with another date - the 20th anniversary of independent Jewish movement in the Ukraine. In those Soviet times the Jewish Public-Cultural Fund of Chernovtsy with the current EAJC General Council Chairman and the Vaad of the Ukraine Chairman Joseph Zissels as its head was the first Ukrainian organization to become a member of Jewish Cultural Association (JCA). The second international conference "Yiddish language and culture" was the culmination of the Week. More than 40 professors from 11 countries participated in it. The program of the Week included presentation of the museum of Jewish culture and history of Bukovina where a unique document is exposed - a Hebrew prayer for Franz I composed in 1792. This unique object was acquired at the auction in Israel.

November 24, Jerusalem - The delegation of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC) led by Secretary General Mikhail Chlenov and General Council Chairman Josef Zissels has arrived in Jerusalem, where they participated in the meeting of representatives of the major international Jewish organizations, dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Israel independence proclamation.

The EAJC leaders took part in the work of the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Agency for Israel, General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities of North America, Keren Hayesod Fund, and the General Council of the World Zionist Organization.

During the visit to Israel and participation in plenary and routine sessions of major world Jewish organizations, the EAJC delegation has conducted a number of separate meetings with colleagues.

In particular, they discussed the nearest joint activities with Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference of Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Eurasia. The situation in the field of Jewish education in the midst of the global financial crisis was reviewed during the meetings with ORT Director General Robert Singer, director of Russian and Slavic studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem Wolf Moskovich, department chairman at Bar Ilan University Ze'ev Khanin, as well as the members of JAFI Committee and Subcommittee on Jewish education in the CIS countries.

December 8-10, Kazan (Russia) -Two important events of the Euro-Asian Jewry took place in the city of Kazan', the capital of the Tatarstan Republic. Those were the session of General Council of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC), which involved Jewish leaders of the CIS countries, Japan, Mongolia, Bulgaria and Georgia, and the Third Annual Conference of the Federal Jewish National and Cultural Autonomy (FJNCA), which gathered the representatives of 38 regional and local Jewish national and cultural autonomies.

A joint session of the EAJC General Council and the FJNCA Conference had been planned , which included the welcoming speeches by Boris Pavlov, the first vice prime minister of the Tatarstan Republic, Gulnara Sergeyeva, State Duma deputy, Shamil Ageyev, chairman of Tatarstan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives of ORT-Russia and the Jewish Agency. The Deputy Minister of Regional Development Mikhail Travnikov, the Authorized Representative of the RF President in the Povolzhskiy Federal District Grigoriy Rapota, Chief Rabbi of Russia Adolf Shaevich, and Chairman of the Council of the Assembly of Peoples of Russia Ramazan Abdulatipov sent their messages of greetings. The EAJC leaders also had a meeting with the Chairman of Tatarstan State Council Farid Mukhametshin.

January 9-11, Ukraine - In Odessa several dozen people took part in a demonstration of solidarity with Israel . The rally was held under several slogans, including "No to terror!" and "We love Israel!" The speakers stressed that they support the IDF fight against terrorism. Mostly young people participated.

On the 11th of January, similar, but larger demonstrations took place in Kiev and Dnepropetrovsk.

Approximately 300 people gathered around the Embassy of the State of Israel in the capital of Ukraine. Zina Kalai-Kleitman, the Ambassador of Israel to Ukraine, Josef Zissels, the chairman of the General Council of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress and chairman of the Vaad of Ukraine, and a number of others spoke before the gathered. The main organizers of the rally were the Ukrainian Jewish Student Union and the "Beitar" youth movement. As in Odessa, young people made the bulk of attendees in the rally.

Even larger was the demonstration of solidarity in Dnepropetrovsk, which gathered over a thousand people, and was organized by the Jewish community of Dnepropetrovsk. The numerous speakers at the rally included the chief rabbi of Dnepropetrovsk and the Dnepropetrovsk region Schmuel Kaminetsky, other representatives of the Jewish community, the deputies of local councils, representatives of various regional national and cultural associations, cultural workers and local community representatives. Gersh Korol, the chairman of the Jewish religious community, read a prayer for the warriors of the IDF.