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Young Professionals Diplomatic Corps

WJC YOUNG PROFESSIONALS DIPLOMATIC CORPS

With the onset of the 21st century, the WJC has taken on the challenge of organizing a cadre of young, promising Jewish leaders - the Young Professional Diplomatic Corps (YPDC) - to lead and advocate for the Jewish People in the years ahead.

The Need

WJC leadership has identified the need to develop and engage young leaders to advocate on behalf of world Jewry. Today's pool of potential leaders and lobbyists will be the single most significant resource for accomplishing the WJC diplomatic mission. This, in turn, will empower a continuum of Jewish leaders, from young adults in their mid-twenties to seniors in their golden years. There is a great need to narrow the current trans-generational leadership gap by building on the older generation's experience while enabling potential young leaders to take an active and substantive role in Jewish community life.

Diplomatic Corps

The YPDC is focused on men and women between the ages of 25-40. These individuals are either beginning to succeed in their professional endeavors or are well established in their careers, with substantial expertise and knowledge to offer the YPDC. Typically, they have already demonstrated active participation in their respective Jewish communities. The YPDC is comprised of individuals representing six geographic regions of the globe as determined by the WJC, including North America, Latin America, Europe, Israel, the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Africa.

Goals

The goal of the Young Professional Diplomatic Corps (YPDC) is to cultivate Jewish diplomatic lay leaders who will address the challenges facing Jews today and in the future. These individuals will take on leadership roles in Jewish institutions worldwide, as well as in other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The YPDC recruits, develops and engages young professionals, and they, in turn, will work to further the mission of the WJC. An effective YPDC will result in dynamic trans-generational leadership.

Inclusion in WJC global and regional activities further cultivates the YPs' individual expertise and brings them into the fold of the WJC structure at all levels of its governance. Additionally, the YPDC actively participates in political conferences (UN, UNESCO, OSCE, OAS, etc.) and engages with other NGOs. The aim is to have regular representation by YPs in key diplomatic venues and extend the reach of the WJC. Increasingly, the WJC is relying upon the YPs for expertise on specific issues and entities, and for representation to various bodies. Post-conference reports and

recommendations generated by the YPDC are shared with leadership of the WJC and its member communities.

Project Description

YPDC is a high-quality initiative engaging young leaders in issues important to the Jewish world. It is not a 'leadership training' program. YPDC extends the reach and scope of the WJC through practical, 'hands-on' diplomacy. Its principal organizational tasks are to:

1. Recruit individual participants from all parts of the globe to actively commit their time and expertise to specific projects of the YPDC;
2. Provide an orientation to WJC missions and operations and offer knowledge and resources pertaining to the tasks at hand, as well as skill development in areas such as lobbying, writing op-ed pieces, and responding to unfavorable world opinion.
3. Develop areas of expertise regarding anti-Semitism, interfaith dialogue, small communities, human rights, security, terrorism and energy, as well as practical familiarity with entities such as the Organization of American States, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, European Union, European Commission and United Nations;
4. Develop a network of Young Professionals and a global discussion forum utilizing the internet.

Year One in Review

The first seminar for 25 participants took place concurrently with the WJC Governing Board in Jerusalem in February 2006. The orientation focused on International Jewish Diplomacy with guest speakers including Israeli Knesset Member Yuli Edelstein; former Mossad Director Efrayim Halevi; WJC Secretary General Stephen E. Herbits; international security expert Shalom Wald; and Professor Esty Webman from the Steven Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University.

In June 2006, WJC officials were joined in Geneva by ten YPDC members for the opening of the UN Human Rights Council. Additionally, they attended the 29th International Conference of the Red Cross to promote Magen David Adom's admission into the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. WJC Director of Future Generations, Peleg Reshef commented, "The Young Professionals in Geneva were engaged in hands-on advocacy, actively lobbying member countries of the Red Cross Federation, as well as participating in the inaugural session of the new United Nations Human Rights Council. The success of the vote was a defining moment for the Jewish people, and it clearly was a defining moment for the young activists who proved themselves here today".

Young Diplomats Professor Sonat Hart from Germany and Lior Herman from the United Kingdom attended the WJC Policy Council in Berlin and subsequently collaborated in writing a proposed policy document that served as a basis for discussions between YPDC members and WJC leadership in New York in September 2006.

Veronica Machtey from Argentina attended the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Santo Domingo. As one of the WJC delegates to this annual regional conference, she met with representatives of several governments and with other NGO delegations to discuss issues relating to Jewish security, anti-Semitism, Iran and the rights of indigenous peoples.

In July 2006, an orientation on Jewish diplomacy was held in Latin America with YPDC participants from Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. Discussions focused on inter-religious dialogue and regional politics, as well as participation in the Latin American Jewish Congress Annual Meeting and the commemoration of the terrorist attack on the AMIA Jewish community headquarters. This orientation identified over 20 young new Latin American community leaders, a number of whom have participated in subsequent international missions on behalf of the WJC.

In August 2006, YP Lior Herman addressed the second Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council as a representative of the WJC. Developing an expertise in the area of human rights and the United Nations, Mr. Herman conveyed the WJC's condemnation of the consistent demonization of Israel by the UN Human Rights Council.

In September 2006, nine YPs convened in New York to attend the opening session of the UN General Assembly. YPs participated in meetings along with WJC leaders and prominent politicians, including Polish President Lech Kaczynski; Turkish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul; Argentine Senator Cristina Fernandez Kirchner, and the Foreign Ministers of Spain, Romania and Latvia. They discussed and advocated on matters pertaining to Iran, Venezuela, human rights and anti-Semitism in their respective countries and regions.

In November 2006, Sonat Hart of Germany, Danny Stone of the United Kingdom and Shani Rozanes of Israel attended the OSCE Experts' Meeting on Best Practices in Combating Anti-Semitism. Hosted in Berlin by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the meeting was a follow-up to the previous OSCE conferences on anti-Semitism. The Young Professionals met with OSCE representatives, civil servants and NGO delegations and participated in seminars on hate crime, police training, data collection and education relating to anti-Semitism.

Four YPs attended the World Jewish Congress Governing Board meeting in Paris. In addition to attending the WJC Governing Board proceedings, the Young Professionals participated in a discussion with Muslim sociologists about promoting equality of opportunity in France.

In February 2007, YP Lior Herman, attended the 70th meeting of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in Geneva. CERD examined the periodic reports submitted by designated countries, including Israel. By having a YP at this UN forum, the WJC was able to deliver a targeted verbal statement and consult in real time with key officials and representatives, thereby extending the reach of the WJC.

YPDC members from Ukraine, Romania, the United Kingdom and Israel participated in the Global Forum on Combating Anti-Semitism held in Jerusalem. They conveyed their ideas about expanding Jewish educational measures beyond Holocaust education and maximizing the potential of the media in the fight against anti-Semitism.

In March 2007, YPs from Argentina and the US attended the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the OAS in Washington, DC. Attendance at the IACHR sessions enriched the development of the YPs from two perspectives: First, it enabled the YPs to better understand the manner in which this special body functions, thereby helping them improve WJC's lobbying capabilities; and secondly, it provided insight into the general topics and specific cases of the member countries that were addressed, including Venezuela.

South African YP Dalia Lichtenstein joined the official delegation of the African Jewish Congress in a visit to the Jewish community of Mozambique.

Canadian YP, Rabbi Yossi Sapirman, along with YPs from Latin America and WJC leadership, attended a meeting of the Latin American Jewish Congress (LAJC) hosted by the CAIV (Confederación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela) in Caracas. In light of the political and social issues facing the Jews of Venezuela at this time, this show of international solidarity with Venezuela's Jewish community was warmly received. YPs were charged with disseminating information to their respective communities. The YPDC also recruited representatives from Ecuador, Chile, Venezuela and Uruguay.

A combination of veteran and new YPs from Latin America, USA, Canada and Mexico participated in the assembly of the North American Jewish Congress (NAJC) in Mexico City. This was an opportunity for new YPs to learn from the experiences of other YPs. YPs took an active part in discussions on regional community strategies on a range of issues, and were also involved in follow-up on initiatives to strengthen connections among communities in Central America and throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Evaluation

The success of the YPDC can be measured in both the short and long term. Short-term measurements are specifically project/task-oriented. Representation at important diplomatic venues, lobbying efforts, inclusion in expert panels and developing areas of expertise are a few tangible measurements.

Leadership roles in Jewish communities, the WJC and other organizations will likely evolve over the course of the next few years.

Successes are evident early on. One such example is that of Sonat Hart, a professor of Jewish Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, who was invited by the Zentralrat (the Central Council of Jews in Germany) to report on the UN Human Rights Council and the International Red Cross conference which she attended in Geneva as a YP. This invitation demonstrates that the YPDC is a resource not just for the WJC, but also a conduit for the greater Jewish world.

**Report prepared by Peleg Reshef, Director of Future Generations Activities
WJC Jerusalem Office
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