

# **Cross-Party Group on Building Bridges with Israel**

09/05/2023 – 6.30pm (via Zoom)

## **Minute**

### **Present**

#### **MSPs**

Jackson Carlaw MSP  
Brian Whittle MSP  
Jeremy Balfour MSP  
Murdo Fraser MSP  
John Mason MSP  
Alexander Stewart MSP  
Fergus Ewing MSP  
Sandesh Gulhane MSP

#### **Invited guests**

Hodaya Avzada  
Ambassador Gideon Behar

#### **Non-MSP Group Members**

Myer Green  
Dorothe Kaufmann  
Christina Jones  
Evy Yedd  
Gina Brown  
Micheline Brannan  
Stanley Lovatt  
Jean Brannigan  
David Rose  
Edward Green  
Donald N Martin  
Susan Verschueren  
Ephraim Borowski  
Kirsty Robson  
Elizabeth Buchanan  
Nathan Wilson  
Bill Bowman  
Jonathan Connelly

#### **CPG Welcome**

Jackson Carlaw MSP welcomed the guests to the meeting of the CPG and gave agenda of the AGM including presentations from Hodaya Avzada and Ambassador Gideon Behar.

## Minutes Approved

Minutes of the last CPG held on 15<sup>th</sup> June approved; proposed by John Mason MSP, seconded by Christina Jones.

## Israeli Embassy Update

Update from Hodaya Avzada, the Head of Domestic and Civil Society Affairs Department.

Gaza strip violence update; Israel are trying to stabilise the situation in the Gaza strip, however, there are currently constant and systematic attempts to destabilise this through attacks to civilian populations in Israel; Israel has launched a targeted attack to senior military officials in the PIG to stop these terror attacks and protect the Israeli civilian population. Israel is not interested in escalation.

Foreign Ministry visited Israel and signed road map between the UK and Israel for the next 10 years; Prime Minister visited and the President visited for the Coronation; Education Minister visited for the World Education Forum.

## Q&A Session

Question regarding Israel's budget; Hodaya stated that the budget should be completed and passed by the end of May.

## Ambassador Gideon Behar Presentation

Jackson introduced Ambassador Gideon Behar and stated Gideon's current role, as well as his career in Israel's government.

Gideon introduced himself as formulating Israel's foreign policy on climate change, stating that Israel are working hard to create regional climate resilience and cooperation in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. Israel's biggest contribution to fighting climate change is through practical solutions, through mitigation and adaptation and this is 'climate innovation'.

Gideon presented on Israel's past of being on the front line of climate innovation; climate change looks to reduce crop yields across Israel and other countries where population is concentrated but Israel are using various techniques such as drip irrigation to increase yields, including rice.

Gideon stated that water stress is a huge crisis in the world; however, Israel has developed many good solutions for water as they are a world leader in water engineering, recycling 94% of its water and in the prevention of water loss.

Israel has invested in renewable energies and technologies; including electric lanes, meaning that vehicles can be charged whilst utilising the lanes, hydroelectric energy. Israel are also using cultured meats and alternative proteins. Israel is also looking at reforestation.

Israel have produced the document, 'Israel's State of Climate Tech 2022 Update' and are holding a conference in the summer on Carbon Capture Technology and Storage in Israel.

## Q&A Session

Question from Fergus Ewing MSP regarding the red meat industry in Israel, whether there is an opportunity to produce beef in Scotland and to link and increase trade with Friends in Israel?

- The alternative protein industry will not replace livestock industry, but Israel want to ensure that demand is met, even with climate change and a changing environment. Alternative proteins will be a huge contribution to food security in the world and ensuring that high quality, healthy and nutritious food can combat malnutrition

Question from Brian Whittle MSP regarding where Israel sits with green hydrogen and vertical farming

- There are companies in Israel who are active in this and would be pleased to bring these companies together to create opportunities with Scotland for meeting and discussion

Question from Murdo Fraser MSP regarding water, as it was striking how low the water levels were in Israel in the sea of Galilea and the River Jordan, and whether there has been any increase?

- The Sea of Galilea sea level has been stabilised and it is 1m below maximum capacity of the sea – however, it used to be the main source of Israel's water, however the flow of the water is being reversed with desalinated sea water from the Mediterranean being brought to Galilea thus increasing the volume of water
- For the River Jordan, there has been a government resolution to increase the water in the Jordan River and have signed an intent agreement with Jordan for the rehabilitation for the southern part of the Jordan River
- The Dead Sea is shrinking by 1.2metres per year, there is not yet a solution however awareness is rising

Question from Jackson Carlaw MSP regarding desalination technology being shared with Israel's neighbouring countries, and if this trend is continuing?

- Cooperation has occurred with many middle eastern countries on water, including Morocco where a large water facility with hydrogen storage is being built, cooperation with the Gulf States on water

## Close of CPG

Jackson closed the CPG, thanking Gideon for his presentation and stated that the group were all very appreciative of the very interesting information contained regarding climate change as well as opportunities for Scotland and Israel to cooperate.

**Next CPG: 5 September 2023**