



BOTSCHAFT DES STAATES ISRAEL

GREETING FROM AMBASSADOR

HE Yakov Hadas-Handelsman

In 2015, the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany is the focus of numerous events and publications in both countries; and this edition of the *KAS International Reports* is no exception.

It does not go without saying that today Israeli-German relations can be described as multi-faceted, trusting and dynamic. It has been a nearly unbelievable development from the darkest hour in history to where we are today. Some may even call it a miracle. The relations between our two countries are unique because of the Shoa. This uniqueness must be preserved because it is – due to different reasons – important today and in the future for both peoples and both nations.

After the Shoa, it was only Germany's willingness to deal with and take responsibility for its guilt that provided an opportunity for rapprochement. But as Jews/Israelis, it was initially very difficult for us. Without losing sight of the perpetrators' guilt and the pain and suffering of the victims, David Ben-Gurion and Konrad Adenauer decided to officially begin a direct dialogue. Despite harsh criticism in Israel, the first Prime Minister of the State of Israel extended his hand to the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. These two courageous statesmen are still the epitome of responsibility and farsightedness. Politicians like Konrad Adenauer have contributed to Israel's renewed sense of



HE Yakov Hadas-Handelsman has been the Ambassador of the State of Israel to the Federal Republic of Germany since March 2012.

trust in Germany. But it was also the personal contacts between committed citizens on both sides, among them athletes as well as scientists and artists, who paved the way for the long process of rapprochement at a civil society level before the establishment of diplomatic relations.



Remembrance as a responsibility: The Speaker of the Knesset, Reuven Rivlin, and the President of the German Bundestag, Dr. Norbert Lammert, at the Memorial in Berlin Grunewald in 2012. From this location, the Nazis deported 50,000 of Berlin's Jews to the concentration and extermination camps. | Source: © Sebastian Kahnert, picture alliance / dpa.

Today, the unique relationship between Israel and Germany constitutes one of the pillars of foreign policy for both nations. In March 2008 Chancellor Angela Merkel addressed the Knesset about "Germany's particular historical responsibility for the security of Israel" and that this historical responsibility forms part of Germany's reason of state. Today's lively exchanges and collaborations stretch far beyond the political sphere to countless other areas, such as business, trade, culture, education, sports, science and research, town twinning and youth exchanges. Many personal friendships have developed between Israelis and Germans over the years. In order to ensure that this continues, we need to encourage interaction between Germans and Israelis from all walks of life.

In 2015, we are looking back on our successes while developing prospects for the future. We stress our commonalities and the fact that Germany and Israel share the same interests and values: democracy, freedom, tolerance, peace and progress. However, we should also acknowledge our differences since Israel has to defend these values under entirely different circumstances than those in Germany.

There will be no shortage of challenges to come, and of course some of these will also affect the relations between our two countries. We would be wise to face these challenges together. Beyond that, we should hold an open and creative dialogue in order to define new goals and build connections for the benefit of both parties. I am often asked why I believe circumstances are so favourable for match-ups between Germany and Israel. With a wink, my response is that Germans seem to have difficulty thinking *outside* the box, while we Israelis find it hard to think *inside* the box. I am convinced that Israeli creativity – and at times creative chaos – goes perfectly with German competence, punctuality and discipline. We complement each other – resulting in a win-win situation.

The processes of building the future involve many partners and supporters on both sides, including the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Whether we are creating bilateral encounters, explaining the background and complexities of issues, launching new initiatives and partnerships or revealing the “other” face of Israel that is less often shown in the media – every action we take to strengthen and expand our relations is a good investment in the future of both our countries. In this respect, we need to pay particular attention to the younger generation. Before long, it will be today’s youth who are defining and creating our bilateral relations. I believe this is why we need to ensure that as many young Germans and Israelis as possible have the opportunity to develop their own and authentic impression of their partners’ countries and daily lives.

Every action we take to strengthen and expand our relations is a good investment in the future of both our countries. In this respect, we need to pay particular attention to the younger generation.

Today, Israelis and Germans are working together on the same level in every area of political and social life – not just in the service of their own interests, but for the benefit of third parties. An example of the progress in Israeli-German relations is our commitment to development cooperation in Africa, a topic which is covered in detail elsewhere in this publication. We are combining

our expertise and efforts in Africa and working on trilateral projects with African partners. I believe these joint projects enrich our relations. Together, we can get things moving in Africa and – in line with the Jewish obligation of “Tikkun Olam” – help to make the world a better place. 70 years ago, no-one would ever have believed that we could come this far.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Yakov Hadas-Handelsman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Yakov" and last name "Handelsman" clearly legible.

Yakov Hadas-Handelsman
Ambassador of the State of Israel
to the Federal Republic of Germany