

## ESTHER MOR – EGM 2024 SPEECH

Today, I not only summarize my two terms as World WIZO President, but over 50 years of my life-long WIZO passion and commitment.

In 1972. I joined ADEI WIZO Italia. We made Aliya in 1980, and I joined WIZO Savyon and served on its Executive. In 2000, I joined World WIZO as Deputy Chair of the Fundraising Division for 8 years and then as Chair for another 8 years – a total of 16 in the Division. My work included initiating new annual fundraising campaigns, and designing all the World WIZO donor and volunteer pins. It took time, I remember Celia Michonik saying to me " Esther you have to open your hand and your pocket if you want to be a Fundraiser" and I did just that. I started making and selling the Woman of Valour, WIZO Chai pins and Sponsor a Child diamond pins. They went like hot cakes and the funds came flowing in. My natural empathy with donors led to an increase in donations and approximately 24 million dollars, were raised annually during my term. These funds enabled, the building of new WIZO Day Care Centres, standardization of playgrounds in all DCCs and major upgrading and of WIZO Schools and Youth Villages.

Then in 2003, I founded "Friends of WIZO" in Israel, and served as its chair for 10 years until 2013. We raised funds, and were able to support two WIZO Day Care Centers. We, F.O.W. partnered with WIZO Israel to host the national Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration at the Kotel for 600 children of single parents.

Our founding mothers in their wisdom designated that our movement **needed** a President to represent it nationally and internationally. **To maintain close contact with all our WIZO Federations; nurture relationships with major donors; to give WIZO a significant voice within the National Institutions, the Diplomatic Corp,** government entities; and to spread our WIZO message and introduce our movement to new audiences.

I am proud that I have carried out all my duties and I was able to introduce WIZO to new audiences, and to spread its empowering

message through personal contacts with International Clubs, that I have been a significant member of since 1983, and held the senior positions of Treasurer for two terms – 6 years; Vice President and President even while serving as your WIZO President. I attended many annual and national Embassy events throughout my life in Israel. Many of them had no idea what WIZO was – now they do. In 2017, I hosted a delegation of Ambassador's wives from 20 countries to visit WIZO Nir HaEmek, and they were amazed at the concept of our Youth Villages and were very impressed by the youth they met.

One of the pleasures of being President is visiting our WIZO projects – the Day Care Centres, the Youth Villages, the Community Centres and the WIZO Branches.

Visits provide me with insight that I can share with you – to instill in you the pride , you should all have in yourselves, and in your projects, to inspire and motivate you - to do even more, because **you are fully capable**. I have done this in all my positions over the years, and it is never more evident that during my WIZO missions abroad.

First and foremost, I get to see the outstanding work you – our Federations carry out in your home countries. Your members passionate commitment, devotion and dedication **IS THE WIND BELOW WIZO'S WINGS**. It has allowed WIZO to continue to do what matters for 103 years, and being able to undertake additional commitments during national crises.

During these last 8 years , I was invited to Australia, South Africa, USA, Germany, Argentina, Czech Republic - Prague, Canada, Holland, Italy, UK. Chile, WIZO Switzerland, WIZO Ireland, WIZO LA, WIZO Mexico. Some missions like to Australia and South Africa were very long, due to the size of the Federation; many of the visits had special significance – special milestones in the Federations chronicles for instance, the CHW's Centennial celebration, WIZOUK's Centennial in 2020 and ADEI WIZO Italia's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Some missions were special milestones , I was in Holland, when **then** WIZO Holland President Joyce Neumann received a national award; in

2017 I was privileged during my mission to Chile, to meet with President Michelle Bachelet; in 2019, WIZO Ireland was established, and I was lucky to be **the first** World WIZO President to visit the new Federation. Last year I was the first President to visit WIZO Mexico in over a decade.

Meeting with our WIZO members worldwide is so important. The **inability** to travel during the **Corona virus** drove this **home even more**. Maintaining daily contact by phone or through conference video calls is great, but they lack what personal face-to-face meetings provide, the ability to express and witness true feelings – pride, excitement, joy, warmth and sadness. I take this opportunity to thank you all, for the home hospitality, you extended to me, for opening your homes to host events in my honour. Thank you for introducing me to your community leaders and members that have so much praise and appreciation for your work.

The President of World WIZO also serves as the President/Chief Executive Officer to the UN - in each of our UN designations – NY, Geneva and Vienna. My office is also responsible for renewing Security Ground Passes for our delegations.

Our delegations in NY, Geneva and Vienna carry out wonderful work, and in 2017 I was invited by our representatives to the UN Dr. Hava Bugajer (Vienna) and Anne Argi (Geneva), who organized a UN side event on post trauma and, within its framework, I bestowed special Vera Weizmann Awards upon - Prof. Shmuel Lahad from Israel **and** Ms. Yoko Arai from Japan for a joint project; and **The “Dream Doctors”** - Founded in 2002, this is a unique Israeli non-profit that integrates professional medical clowns, into Israeli hospitals. **Dedicated to improving patient wellbeing**. The Dream Doctor’s **pioneering**, model of operation, has earned the organization, international recognition as a leader in their field.

An integral part of your President's duties is representing WIZO in the National Institutes. Currently, I am a member of the Executive and the Extended Executive of, the World Zionist Organization, and a member of the Committee for the Zionist Affairs. I also represented WIZO on the prestigious Committee for the Amendment of their Constitution. WIZO

is also a member in the Zionist General Council and the JNF-KKL General Assembly;

This gave me the wonderful opportunity to participate in the 6-day "Following in Herzl's footsteps" that covered milestones in his life in Budapest, Vienna and Paris. I was able to share the Vienna part of the journey with WIZO Austria.

After sitting on the prestigious WZO Committee that planned the 2022 event marking the 125th Anniversary of the first Zionist Congress Meeting held in Basel, I proudly headed, a WIZO delegation of over 20 to Basel, and in 2023, the WIZO delegation at the WZO's celebration of Israel's 75<sup>th</sup> Independence Day in Jerusalem.

In addition to serving on the Jewish Agency Board of Governors, I sit on the Aliyah Committee. During the three sessions held annually, we also meet with the various types of Shlichim and hear from them about their fantastic educational work within Jewish Communities, challenges combatting Anti-Semitism and BDS, and their hasbara work.

Both the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency are very much with their hands on the national pulse and their support for the North and South of Israel is constant. Israel's South has been under attack, sporadically for the past 20 years. During previous attacks, the WZO purposely held its Executive meetings in the North or the South - so we could show our solidarity with the residents. I met the current Chief of Staff Herzl HaLevi, when he served as Chief of the Southern Command.

You have often asked me why I invest so much in these entities – it is because it yields a very positive profit. They provide WIZO with a global platform to display its work. Moreover, as a member of the WZO, WIZO is entitled to yearly allowances to cover Zionist activities, and that is very very useful. I would also like to share with you, that the WZO is funding 5 apartments in our Parents Home for evacuees from the South, for 3 months.

In the international Arena, I sit on the World Jewish Congress Executive (WJC). It convenes three meetings a year; in NY, Jerusalem and one in an either European or South American country. To these meetings I always invite the WIZO President of the hosting country – the Czech Republic, Canada, USA, Italy, to name a few. I also meet Jewish Community leaders, members of the US administration and world leaders. For instance, in November 2022, I had the honour and privilege to represent you at a 3-day visit to the Vatican and to meet with His Holiness Pope Francis. On a personal note, during my audience with the Pope I asked him to bless 99 year old Renata Perez a dear friend and donor of WIZO with good health, and he graciously blessed her.

As your President, I was fortunate to be part of very special events. In September 2019, I was invited to join President Donald Trump and senior White House officials, for a national conference call with Jewish leaders, to celebrate with them the upcoming High Jewish Holy Days. I had a second Conference call on President Trump's Executive Order to Combatting the Rise of Anti-Semitism. Then during Covid, I was invited by President Trump to attend on September 15, 2020, the official signing ceremony for the Abraham Accords, which was hosted by him, at the White House front lawn. It certainly was the highlight of the year. During Covid – really!!!! These three milestone events were a great honour for WIZO.

But by far the greatest personal and WIZO honour was the invitation in July 2023, by President Isaac Herzog, a great WIZO friend, to participate in **“Kol Ha’am—Voice of the People - the President's Initiative for Worldwide Jewish Dialogue,”** that is fostering open dialogue between Jewish communities, and advising our President on core challenges facing the Jewish People.

I would like to share with you, a very humble moment I experienced, but at this time, it has taken on a very different meaning. In 2020 "ZAKA" bestowed upon me – their woman of Valour Award. ZAKA volunteers, who are mostly orthodox trained paramedics and are on call 24/7, they respond to the scenes of terrorist attacks and homicides throughout Israel. We are used to seeing them at horrific scenes **to make sure** the victims are treated with the utmost respect. They were among the first responders on 7/10 and even their experience

couldn't prepare them for the carnage they would find. Even the most experienced of them, are **not** able to describe the heinous and barbaric acts carried out by those horrible monsters.

For the past three months, WIZO has been an integral part of the National War Effort and the campaign to release the hostages. It has been an emotional rollercoaster – **WHERE A SIMPLE QUESTION LIKE HOW ARE YOU – IS NOT EASY TO ANSWER.** We are told that the war will not be short as the Government is adamant that the residents of South Israel who have suffered for 20 long years, and that damned bloody day in October ,will NEVER suffer again, and therefore until the removal of Hamas from Gaza, the war will continue. WIZO will continue to carry out its work and support the country as much as it can. Israel deserves peace, the residents in the South of Israel deserve to be able to live in tranquility like everyone else. It will take 2-3 years to rebuild the kibbutzim, but they will rise again. They will flourish.

I want to thank you all for your continuous, steadfast and outstanding support to allow WIZO to do what matters in our projects and in our communities. I have had a wonderful 8-year tenure and I thank you for your vote of confidence throughout.

I hope I have been able to inspire and motivate you in some way, to reach for the stars, to be **the** best possible version of yourself, learn something new every day, be creative, be innovative, be proud of who you are and what you do, and stand tall for yourselves, for WIZO and for Israel.

As I embark on my next WIZO chapter as Honourary Life President, I know what I need to do, it is elementary – I will continue to do my utmost to promote WIZO as the biggest, most prominent and outstanding voluntary sisterhood, nationally, and internationally, as I have always done. And.... I hope, you will continue to walk with me on this journey. Thank you for listening to me. I love you all. Goodbye dear friends.

