Report on the 5th Young Jewish Adult Forum

Organised by B'nai B'rith Europe with the kind support of the Raoul Wallenberg Lodge Berlin and under the patronage of the Lord Mayor of the City of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit.

Report by Simone Hofmann

The 5th Young Jewish Adult forum took place from Friday November 11th- Sunday November 13th, 2011 at the Crown Plaza City Centre Hotel in Berlin. The central theme was: "Building the Future in a changing World". More than 170 participants from some 27 countries attended this forum. Already upon arrival the atmosphere was great. Most of the participants had attended the previous forums and knew each other - it was the ideal place to renew friendships.

The proceedings started with a Friday night service followed by a festive Kabbalath Shabbat Dinner in the presence of Mr. Rolf Schuette, Head of the Protocol Department of the Federal Land of Berlin, the President of the Jewish Community of Berlin Mrs. Lala Suesskind, the Grand Senior of B'nai B'rith and Honourary Lifetime President of B'nai B'rith Europe, Joseph Domberger.

Dr. András Kain President of the Raoul Wallenberg lodge and his wife Cynthia, Representatives of Bank Hapoalim, Allan Jacobs President of B'nai B'rith International and Ralph Hofmann, Host and President of B'nai B'rith Europe.

A special gift was presented to Mr. Schuette to acknowledge the contribution to this forum by the Senate of Berlin, one of the sponsors.

Stimulating speeches by the official guests started off an excellent forum. The participants were sitting, chatting and enjoying themselves a lot. Eva Vadasz opened the evening with a wonderful speech and mentioned in it the responsibility everyone has towards the others.

This was followed by Dr. Kain and then Ralph Hofmann who spoke about the decision of UNESCO to accept Palestinian membership and about the release of Gilad Shalit. He also spoke about the history of Jews in Berlin, a subject which was taken up by the following speakers, Mr. Schuette and Mrs. Suesskind.

Erik Engelmayer, a loyal friend of the forum and a great person, then took responsibility for introducing ice - breaking activities.

The Shabbat morning service took place in the hotel. Many of the participants took the chance to go off on a brief sight-seeing tour of Berlin, but they all came back together again for lunch, where Allan Jacobs, President of BBI, spoke about the work of B'nai B'rith International and its international projects. Lunch was followed by the Working Panels, the major objective of the forum.

This year the format of the panels was changed. More speakers were to attend the panels, giving their statement and views and to discuss these views with the participants.

Under the chairmanship of Nathan Rubinsztejn, Rabbi Tovia Ben Chorim and Rabbi Gesa Ederberg introduced the subject "Traditional values in a modern World".

In the panel "Business Culture" Joe Domberger, Dr. Bernhard Quensel, business lawyer and Hannah Pri-Zan, member of the board of management of Bank Hapoalim and Head of Client Asset Area, who came especially from Israel, discussed economic issues under the chairmanship of Eric Engelmayer, while the specialist panel on "Medical Ethics" chaired by Dr. Ilias Pessach consisted of Dr. Tiberus Berlad, Radiologist, Dr. Richard Stern, Cardiologist at the Jewish Hospital in Berlin and Priv. Doz. Dr. Neu, Psychiatrist at the Jewish Hospital in Berlin.

In the panel "The Global Voice of the Jewish Community, are we really heard around the world- task of leadership within and outside B'nai B'rith" Erika Van Gelder, Senior Vice President of B'nai B'rith, Moti Fins, Victor Hajos, Budapest, Irina Rosensaft, Germany, Edwige Ouaknine, France, Moderator Daniel Citone, Italy, matters concerning how to become and be a leader and how to network among each other were discussed.

The Panel "Israeli Perspectives and Hasbarah in Europe" Media Relations - what should be the wider task of the wider Jewish Community was very controversial. The panel participants, Eldad Beck, Correspondent of Yediot Achanot in Berlin, Tal Gat, Head of the PR Department at the Israeli Embassy in Berlin, Adam Margolis, Project Co-coordinator at the Office the Vice Chairman of the WZO, Israel and Jochen Feilcke, President of the German / Israel Society and President of the European Friends of Israel discussed certain matters on the topic with the participants. This panel was chaired by Nuno Wahnon Martins, BBI Director of European Union Affairs.

The Havdala Ceremony, attended by almost all participants, was performed by John Reeves, Chair of the Young Adult Commission of BBE and when Roman Kuperschmidt from Frankfurt began to play his Clarinet no one could stand still. A big Hora Circle was formed and we sang and danced together.

Thank you Roman and John for creating a wonderful atmosphere.

At the Dinner Ralph Hofmann thanked everyone who took part in the organization of the forum. He gave certificates of trees for the B'nai B'rith Forest in Israel bought as a token of appreciation to all moderators of the panels and to Eva Vadasz who had welcomed the participants at the beginning.

Special gifts were presented to the organizers and to Dr. András Kain, who assisted a lot during the preparation of the forum.

Mrs. Zipora Roitman, Representative of Bank Hapoalim in Germany and Mrs. Hanna Pri-Zan were awarded a special gift to mark the support of Bank Hapoalim as one of the sponsors of the forum.

At a special ceremony, a new award, the "Simone and Ralph Hofmann Award for Young Jewish Adults", was presented to George Sebastian Weiner of the Dr. Moses Rosen Lodge in Bucharest and to Raoul Beck of Henry Dunant Lodge in Geneva for their devotion and work they did for their lodges. This award will be given every year to young adults who contribute in a special way to the life of their lodges. These young people should be an inspiration and example for all others.

On Saturday evening after dinner it was party time. DJ Sivan Neuman from Frankfurt made everyone dance with his perfect selection of music and some stayed until 04.00 h in the morning.

Nevertheless everyone was ready on Sunday morning at 10:00 to start the last part of the programme of this remarkable weekend - the city tour. At "Track 17" a small memorial celebration took place. From this track in the area of Grunewald approximately 55,000 Jewish men, woman and children were deported to the Death Camps between 1942 and 1945. Ralph Hofmann spoke about this time of very sad history of our people and John Reeves recited Kaddisch and El Male Rachmamim.

We were all very quiet and it was all very emotional. The participants thanked the organizers specially for arranging this ceremony.

After lunch everyone said farewell and many participants said good bye personally to the organizers. We shall meet again next year in England was the theme when everyone left.

The organising team says thank you to all who helped to make this forum such a success.