



Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia,
Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia

NewsWatch May 2003

NCSJ Board of Governors Meeting Highlights Vienna Conference, Community Projects

Over 100 diplomats, policymakers and community leaders attended NCSJ's May 5 Board of Governors meeting for updates on U.S. policy, community partnerships, and the June 2003 Vienna Conference on Anti-Semitism. Diplomats from 18 countries attended, including the ambassadors of Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia and Uzbekistan, and the Chargé d'Affaires of Belarus.

The Honorable A. Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, delivered the keynote speech. Dr. Robert J. Meth, NCSJ Chairman, and Dr. Joel M. Schindler, NCSJ President, co-chaired the meeting. Other speakers included



At May 5 Board of Governors Meeting: (l.-r.) NCSJ Chairman Dr. Robert J. Meth, Assistant Secretary of State A. Elizabeth Jones, NCSJ President Dr. Joel M. Schindler
(All May 5 photos: Ron Sachs/CNP)

Vienna: An Action Plan Against Anti-Semitism

Next month, NCSJ and other organizations will join the U.S. Government for a groundbreaking session to coordinate efforts against European anti-Semitism. Plans have been finalized for the international conference on anti-Semitism, be-



John Becker, Advisor to the Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, and Stuart Jones, Deputy Director of the Office of European Security and Political Affairs, U.S. State Department

ing held June 19-20 in Vienna by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Official delegations from the 55 participating states, covering Europe, the former Soviet Union and North America, will join non-governmental organizations to open a new track in the Helsinki process – an ongoing mechanism for addressing anti-Semitism in the OSCE region.

The OSCE, which grew from the historic Helsinki process, legitimized dissent in the Soviet bloc and is helping post-communist Europe build pluralistic democracies. Now these nations are working with the United States to promote region-wide action against anti-Semitism.

With its European focus and record of results, the OSCE is less politicized than many other international fora such as the United Nations, which has never addressed anti-Semitism in a deliberate or sustained manner. The infamous 1991 World Conference Against Racism, in Durban, South Africa, again underscored for many the UN system's deep animus toward Israel and Jews. Recognizing anti-Semitism as a threat to regional stability, the OSCE will use the

the State Department's John Becker, Advisor to the Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, and Stuart Jones, Deputy Director of the Office of European Security and Political Affairs; Alexander Mashkevich, President of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress (EAJC), and Michael Chlenov, EAJC Secretary General; Mahnaz Harrison and Michael Steiner, of the United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh (UJF); and Jeanne Ellinport, Executive Director of The Israel Forever Foundation.

OSCE VIENNA CONFERENCE

John Becker and Stuart Jones discussed the upcoming Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Inter

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results from Vienna to formulate an action plan and implement best practices for governments and societies to combat anti-Semitism.

For the past year, NCSJ has worked closely with the U.S. Government and Congress, especially the U.S. Helsinki Commission, advancing the issue through the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly beginning July 2002 in Berlin; through U.S. Government efforts at the December 2002 OSCE Ministerial Council in Porto, Portugal; and mobilizing international support for the June conference. Among the strongest advocates were Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland.

A number of NCSJ's partner agencies have been very active in this endeavor, including the American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Hadassah, and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

NCSJ Strengthens Pittsburgh-Georgia Partnership



At May 5 meeting: (l.-r.) Ambassador Levan Mikeladze of Georgia, Michael Steiner and Mahnaz Harrison of the United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh, and Dr. Joel M. Schindler, NCSJ President

In an April visit organized by the United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh (UJF), NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin accompanied Georgian Ambassador Levan Mikeladze and Mamuka Tsereteli, Executive Director of the American-Georgia Business Council, to Pittsburgh, PA, to explore ways to expand UJF's work in the Republic of Georgia.

The delegation met with business leaders and members of the high-tech sector, as well as the deputy mayor, and visited senior living facilities in the area. They also met with the UJF Board of Trustees and other community leaders.

Board of Governors Meeting, cont'd

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national Conference on Anti-Semitism, the first high-level effort by European and North American governments to address the rise in global anti-Semitism in a sustained and coordinated way. (See Vienna story)

Dr. Meth remarked: "This should be a proud moment for all OSCE participating states, especially the United States and the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe."

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Alexander Mashkevich, who was instrumental in organizing the February 2003 International Conference on Peace and Harmony in Kazakhstan, detailed recent EAJC projects, and Mikhail Chlenov provided historical context to the EAJC, which is working to promote Jewish welfare and

positive interethnic relations in Eastern Europe and Asia.

Mahnaz Harrison and Michael Steiner described Pittsburgh's community projects in several successor states, highlighting the relationship with Georgia they are developing in coordination with NCSJ. (See Pittsburgh story) Mr. Steiner thanked NCSJ for its help with projects in Russia, Estonia, and Uzbekistan.

Jeanne Ellinport described the "Israel 55" campaign, which will culminate in an anniversary event in December.

U.S. POLICY

Secretary Jones covered a range of issues underpinning U.S. policy in Europe and Eurasia, including the promotion of tolerance, political reform, free markets, and outreach on law enforcement, corruption, and secure borders. She recalled, "NCSJ and the State Department enjoy a long history of working

"This visit is a model of the kind of work that more communities and federations could engage in, with NCSJ facilitating an exciting process that brings the two largest Jewish communities outside of Israel together – the American and FSU Jewish communities," said Michael Steiner, UJF Director of Donor Development.

Thanks to the UJF-Georgia partnership, and the sponsorship of Anne Molloy and Henry Posner III and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a new Hesed Center has been constructed in Tbilisi, to be dedicated this summer. The UJF is now working to increase Pittsburgh's business and cultural ties with Georgia, with the help of Pittsburgh's Mahnaz and Ross Harrison. They and Mr. Steiner will return to Georgia in late summer.

together toward common goals. In the 1970s and '80s, NCSJ worked – with incredible success – for free emigration from the former Soviet Union. Now NCSJ is in the forefront of the religious and cultural revival of Jewish communities in Eurasia."

Secretary Jones reemphasized the Administration's commitment to graduating Russia and the other involved states from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, and its continued vigilance on human rights and religious freedom in the region.

Speaking of the upcoming Vienna Conference, she said that "the U.S. hopes to field a strong delegation to this event because we take it very seriously. The OSCE meeting should be a rallying point in the Euro-Atlantic Community's approach to this species of hatred."

See www.ncsj.org for full text of Secretary Jones' speech

Reform Movement Grows in FSU

ARZA/World Union, North America continues to support the growth of Progressive Judaism in the former Soviet Union. Numbering over 100, these congregations include those newly formed in Estonia and

Riga, Latvia, as well as a nascent congregation in Vilnius, Lithuania.

In Ukraine, Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny has been visiting Jewish inmates at a maximum-security prison near Lviv, where he supervised a course from the Open Hebrew University. He sent a letter to Ukraine's general prosecutor protesting the closure of a prayer room for Jewish inmates. He also officiated at the acceptance of a Torah donated to the Lviv congregation by a congregation in Long Beach, California.

A Jewish School is under construction in Lviv and a synagogue in Yevpatoriya is being renovated. A new community center has opened in Kyiv, and Kharkiv's fledgling congregation recently received approval from the local municipality.

Two Russian students from London's Leo Baeck College will be ordained this June

and assigned to congregations in Russia and Belarus.

For more information, contact Eugene Epshteyn at ARZA/WUNA at 212-650-4280 or eeptshteyn@uahc.org



Young people from a Progressive congregation in Smolensk, Russia display their bar- and bat-mitzvah certificates (Photo: ARZA/WUNA)

NCSJ

2020 K Street, N.W., Suite 7800
Washington, D.C. 20006

Phone: 202-898-2500 Fax: 202-898-0822

www.ncsj.org

Email: ncsj@ncsj.org

NCSJ Chairman	Robert J. Meth, M.D.
NCSJ President	Joel M. Schindler, Ph.D.
NCSJ Executive Director	Mark B. Levin
NewsWatch Editor	Sarah E. Hutchison