**Presentation:**

**1.** I would like to share with you what kind of a process I went while preparing this presentation.

At first, I thought to give kind of a report on the "Peace Project": how we prepared the grant proposal, how we planned the whole program and how it was implemented with 4 participants in 2017.

But, our report on the "Peace Project" was presented several times within the organization and was published during the Board of Directors meetings, to the General Assembly at the conference in Greece and it was published in the Organization's magazine "The World News" by the participants from their point of view and experience.

So, I asked CIF Israel colleagues and members what and how they would like me to present the "Peace Project" and then I started to work, trying to look at the "big picture" and share with you CIF Israel and my idea what "Peace Project" means to us.

CIF Organization's "Peace Project" is not yet clearly defined by the Organization but in general I believe that peace projects should be implemented in conflicted places and situations to contribute for peace and understanding.

Israel, as you all know, is in a conflict situation with the Palestinians and peace projects are aimed to be "a drop in the sea" to bring peace and understanding but no doubt we do believe this should be the way.

Anyway, I felt I'd like to present to you Israel as a place with many cultures and traditions. I will start with presenting some facts and explanations, then the history of peace projects and then I will concentrate on CIF Israel perspective and understanding of what "Peace Project" means to us.

2.  **Israel demographics:**

**(Population - 8,855,000 (2018) \* \* only includes officially held territories)**

The State of Israel has a population of approximately 8,855,000 inhabitants as of the first half of 2018.

**(Jews (75%), Arabs (20%), others (5%) )**

Some 75% are Jews of all backgrounds (about 6 and a half million individuals),

20% are Arab of any religion other than Jewish (about 1,800,000 individuals),

while the remaining 5% (about 400,000 individuals) are defined as "others", including persons of Jewish ancestry deemed non-Jewish by religious law and persons of non-Jewish ancestry who are family members of Jewish immigrants, Christian non-Arabs, Muslim non-Arabs and all other residents who have neither an ethnic nor religious classification.

**(Main sub-groups: Jews (around 75%) and Arabs (around 21%) )**

Generally, population trends in Israel reflect distinct patterns of two sub-groups: Jews (around 75%) and Arabs (around 21%).

**3**. **Jewish population in Israel:**

Jewish Israelis: Israeli citizens of the Jewish ethnicity or faith and descendants of Israeli-Jewish emigrants outside of Israel.

1. Israeli-born mostly second or third-generation
2. Descended from European Jews (50%) and from Arabic countries (50%)

1. Coming from Europe and the Americas, Asia and Africa - Ethiopia and India.

As for today: 68% are Israeli-born, mostly second or third-generation Israelis and the rest are Jewish immigrants to Israel: 22% from Europe and the Americas and

10% from Asia and Africa including the Arab countries.

Nearly half of all Israeli Jewish population are descended from Jews who came from Europe, while around the same number are descended from Jews who came from Arab countries. Over two hundred thousand are descended from Ethiopian and Indian Jews.

**Religious observance - A wide spectrum: Ultra-orthodox religious to a secular lifestyle**

**4.** Jewish Israelis who immigrated from the diaspora communities are mainly from two groups:

**Ashkenazi Jews:** who commingled in the Holy Roman Empire around the end of the first millennium

**Sephardic Jews:** who settled in Spain or the Iberian Peninsula when deported by the Romain Empire around the end of the first millennium

**The other Jewish population are small groups such as** Cochin Jews (India), Karaite Jews, Jews from Arabic countries, Ethiopian Jews and Russian Jews.

**As you can imagine, there is a wide range of Jewish cultural traditions and customs.**

**5**. Nearly of 25% of Israel’s population (citizens) is **not Jewish** among them:
Arab Muslims, Bedouin, Ahmadiyya, Arab Christians, Copts, Druze,

Several Syriac Christians who are ethnic groups, Samaritans, Armenians, Circassians (Muslim Russians), people from post-Soviet states, Finns, Baha'is, Vietnamese and African Hebrew Israelites.

**6**. **There are very few foreign workers, non-Jewish Immigrants and refugees**

**who naturalized (became citizens) mainly by marriage or are acknowledged refugees from**: Nigeria, Senegal, Philippines, Nepal, China, Thailand, Romania, Cyprus and South America (mainly Colombia).

**Non-citizens with special permits are from** African countries: Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia and the Ivory Coast.

**Foreign workers coming to work in Israel:** Chinese, Thai, Filipinos, Nigerians, Romanians, Latin Americans.

**Other acknowledged refugees from:** Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraqi Kurdistan, North Korea and Kurdish refugees from Turkey.

**7.** **About the conflict:**

**1920s: Intercommunal violence between Palestinian Jews and Arabs intensified during British Palestine Mandate by Jewish immigration.**

**1947: Civil war derived from the Israel state UN declaration, consequent intervention of Arab armies on behalf of the Palestinian Arabs.**

**Today's Key issues: mutual recognition, borders & security, water rights, control of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian freedom of movement, right of return.**

The conflict continues to the present day on various levels.

**Neighbor Relationships: Israel surrounded by Arabic countries:** Jorden, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt**. Peace treaties established with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994).**

**Peace treaties: enables** cooperation: open borders, diplomatic relations, security and defense, Israel recognized the special role of Jordan in Muslim Holy shrines in Jerusalem, water, Palestinian refugees (four-way committee: Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians) to try to work towards solutions.

Many attempts to create an independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel (two-state solution).

Negotiations by Israeli government and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) mediated by United States, Russia, the European Union and the UN.

Most Palestinians live today in east Jerusalem, Judea mountains, Samaria and Gaza, separated by walls and fences.

Palestinians have a quasi-state in the West Bank (Area C), with its own parliament, courts, intelligence services and foreign ministry.

Jerusalem is divided into east and west. East Jerusalem Palestinians have either Israeli residency or Israeli citizenship.

**A wide variety of views and opinions within Israelis and Palestinian.**

Palestinian citizens of Israel are entitled to vote and participate in Israeli political life and several Palestinians are members of the Israeli parliament.

Today, Israeli Arabic citizens are involved in most academic and professional areas in the Israeli society.

**8**. **CIF Israel and CIF International**

* **Israeli professionals participated in exchange programs since the 60th when offered Exchange Programs in the USA.**
* **More than 250 Israelis went to programs in the USA and later also to CIF programs in Finland, India, Sweden, The Netherlands, Italy, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia.**
* **CIF Israel branch was established in 1978.**
* **Since 1998 CIF Israel offers Professional Exchange Programs every spring for two-three weeks and had so far over 35 participants from all over the globe.**

On the right side is the Israeli Exchange Program for the year 2019.

**9.** **Peace Project and CIF Israel**

* **First initiative when Mimmo Merola approached CIF Israel to work together to bring an Israeli and Palestinian participant together to the Italian exchange programs (2012, 2015).**

* **Next step: In Cyprus (2011) and Turkey (2013), involving Palestinians in CIF international conferences.**

In Turkey conference CIF Israel (with the help of Ofra, CIF Israel member), introduced the "Families Forum" Organization to CIF to be invited by CIF International and so enabled Mazan Farage and Nir Oren to present their mutual activity for peace and understanding.

**As you know, CIF Israel had the first Peace Project granted by CIF International in 2017.**

So, after these initiatives were established, **Today, Peace Projects are part of the CIF** **International budget and agenda**

**10.** **Peace Project - How do CIF Israel Understand it?**

**General definition:**

**Initiative taken by organizations and/or communities to work together in bringing peace to societies through mutual respect for better understanding.**

**Regarding the Palestinian – Israeli conflict:**

Mainly after the Oslo agreements (1993-2000) many civil initiatives throughout the middle east and worldwide, to work towards and to normalize relationships between Israelis and Palestinians in different areas such as: economics, welfare, medicine, environment, agriculture & water and for political change.

**CIF Israel, as part of the International Organization, follows the principals stated in the Organization’s Statute**

“The Organization is a private and not for profit, politically and religiously independent Organization.

 Its purpose is to promote professional, cross-cultural and educational exchange for those working in the field of social services. The learning and sharing generated by the exchange provide opportunities for broadening professional as well as personal development and so contributes to peace and understanding”.

I would like to cite few lines from one of our participants who attended our PEP 2018 which demonstrates the "Peace Project" spirit and point of view within CIF Israel's Programs:

**"… I read about Israel before coming to CIF, but it was not the same as experiencing it in person. During CIF-Israel, I learned about and visited many cultures, including the Jews, Bedouins, Arabs, Ethiopian refugees, and Holocaust Survivors… I experienced a traditional Shabbat…. visited the Old City of Jerusalem…the Israel Museum, Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum…. Dead Sea, Bethlehem, a Bedouin family and a kibbutz…. The CIF-Israel was a meaningful experience for me personally and professionally. I returned…with renewed energy and many new ideas.** Mary-Lynn Kasunic, USA.

I would like to mention that all three participants where hosted in Juliet's apartment in Jerusalem upon their arrival!

**11**. **CIF Israel Peace Project to day**

**CIF Israel strives to bring understanding, equality and peace between people who are subject to conflicted situations no matter on what ground.**

**Peace and understanding means cooperation, respect, preventing discrimination and to contribute to the society’s wellbeing.**

**Through and thanks to the Peace Project initiative, CIF Israel collaborated with “Ossim Shalom “organization as CIF Israel members to host participants, enhance dialog and to discuss professional/cultural issues at sensitive and complex situations.**

**CIF Israel PEPs offer an opportunity to meet many different cultures prevailing in the Israeli society, to learn about the minorities’ professional viewpoint while dealing with the needy and disadvantaged populations as well as learning about everyday life.**

**12 -13.** **Photos speak better than words!**

Several lines from a participant report – published in the World News Winter 2017:

**"…It would be naïve to explore social services in Israel without awareness of the wall that separates its Jewish and Arab inhabitants…or the wall that separates segments within the Jewish community—roughly speaking, of the 80% of Israel that is Jewish, 20% of residents adhere to Orthodox faith, 20% endorse Zionist nationalism, and another 40% defines itself as more-or-less secular.**

**For this reason, it was enlightening to have exchanges with individuals from differing backgrounds.**

**Israel is a fraught country: not only are its Jews and Arabs skeptical of each other, but there’s distrust among Jewish contingents….**

**That said, almost every conversation with every agency host or presenter revealed an ah-ha moment of understanding. Many of these were disturbing: abuse is growing in the Orthodox community; “traditional” values are gaining over secularism; the socialist founding spirit of Israel has morphed into privatization; even at the secular high school, instructors fail to question the division between Jews and Arabs.**

**But others were inspiring: more Arab women are attending university; organizations like Ossim Shalom are slowly gaining ground; there may never be a lasting peace—it works in the government’s favor to keep groups at each other's throats, was a sentiment I heard more than once—but individuals are reaching out in small but meaningful ways, and taking responsibility for their own communities.**

**I speak for each of my colleagues in expressing our delight at spending time with the Diab family; not only was Mohammad a fabulous host, but his responses to our not-always-discreet inquiries about living in an often-hostile society were thoughtful and generous…I want to thank everyone who made this program the exceptional experience it was: it opened my eyes, expanded my world and increased my knowledge….**

Barbara Goodman (USA) with input from Bhvna Mehta (India) and Agneta Bjorkland (Sweden).

**14.** **CIF Israel future vision**

**Peace projects will contribute to join together professionals from different countries and cultures, to host participants, to enhance dialog, build new professional, social, cultural and personal connections for better understanding as well as personal growth.**

**15-16.** **References to keep publishers' rights and to suggest you further information.**

**17.** Photo – CIF Israel welcomes Peace Project participants and **thank you for your attention!**