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Claims Conference ועידת התביעות
The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

Message from the Chairman

Dear Lee,

As you will recall, in November of last year, the German government and the Claims Conference jointly marked the 60th anniversary of the Claims Conference with a ceremony in Berlin. At that ceremony, I, together with Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble of Germany, executed an overall agreement that outlines the relationship between the two parties for the future. The first fruits of the new understanding are reflected in the monumental agreement reached in negotiations with the German government that just concluded in Jerusalem.

Below please find a note from Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, Special Negotiator, summarizing the results:

Letter from Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat

The Claims Conference has successfully negotiated an agreement with the German government which, taken with the amount previously agreed upon, will provide approximately \$1 billion over the four-year-period, 2014-2017, for homecare for Jewish Nazi victims, with the annual amount increasing every year through 2017.



The Claims Conference negotiating delegation met with German government Finance Ministry representatives.



German government officials lay a wreath at the eternal flame at Yad Vashem. In the background stand, from left, Roman Kent, Amb. Stuart Eizenstat, and Greg Schneider.

The amount the German government will provide in 2015 – €205 million (\$266 million) – is an increase of 45 percent over 2014. The government will also provide €210 million (\$273 million) for 2016 and €215 million (\$280 million) for 2017. The previously agreed-upon amount for 2014 is approximately €142 million (\$185 million), an increase of €12 million (\$15 million) over 2013 funding. Thus, taken together, this historic agreement is a commitment of €772 million or approximately \$1 billion for the four years 2014 - 2017. The German government also committed to review annually the adequacy of these funding levels.

This unprecedented amount of funding means that we can give Nazi victims around the world the aid that they desperately need as they grow more frail. Further, that the agreement encompasses funding through 2017 underscores the German government's ongoing commitment to Holocaust survivors. It is all the more impressive because it comes at a time of budget austerity in Germany.

This agreement for historic levels of homecare funding for Nazi victims is the result of many months of a sustained, concerted effort by our negotiating delegation and by Claims Conference staff. The German government agreed to provide this funding after reviewing extensive detailed material on the numbers and distribution of Holocaust victims, poverty and disability rates, governmental supports and costs of service as well as projections of future needs of Holocaust victims, which was prepared by your organization.

In advance of the meeting of our full delegation, there were many working group level meetings between Claims



Tova M., 87, reaches out to Amb. Eizenstat and the State Secretary in a gesture of thanks. She survived Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. Claims Conference-funded homecare allows her to stay in her home with dignity.



Greg visited with Irina G., 92, who survived the Warsaw Ghetto. She showed him and the State Secretary family photos.

Conference staff and that of the Finance Ministry. In addition, Roman Kent met with key German government officials helping to solidify this agreement.

I wanted to personally let you know of my gratitude to Greg Schneider for having the vision and drive to organize this campaign, which has culminated in this agreement. Greg has made it a priority to gather detailed information and data on the growing plight of aging Nazi victims and present it to the German government in an effective and compelling fashion in order to demonstrate their increasing needs to the German government. His dedication and professionalism are above and beyond what could be expected, and he made it clear throughout this process that he was absolutely committed to obtaining the funding to which the Finance Ministry ultimately agreed. Greg's passion and integrity are well appreciated by our German government interlocutors. The lives of tens of thousands of Holocaust victims will be made easier in their old age due to Greg's skill and vision.

Karen Heilig of the Claims Conference staff also deserves special recognition.

Several other significant agreements were reached at our Jerusalem negotiations:

Open Ghettos

Under the current regulations governing Claims Conference pension programs, those survivors who were in "closed" ghettos, surrounded by a wall, are entitled to receive payments if incarceration in a ghetto is the basis for applying. There are, however, thousands of survivors who were in ghettos that were not closed, such as in

Czernowitz, Romania and many places in Bulgaria, among other Nazi-allied countries. These Jews lived under conditions similar to closed ghettos: under curfew; deprived of their jobs; subject to persecution measures; wore the yellow star; received reduced food rations; and lived in constant fear of deportation.

Resulting from the negotiations, the German government agreed to expand the eligibility criteria of the two pension programs, the Article 2 Fund and the Central and Eastern European Fund, as of January 1, 2014, for those Jews who lived under the conditions noted above. A specific list of 300 “open ghettos” was agreed upon. The Claims Conference estimates that, as result, an additional 2,000 to 3,000 Holocaust survivors will become eligible for a compensation pension. This will mean increased funding by the German government of some 7 to 11 million Euros per year. Further, the Claims Conference has the right to submit the names of additional ghettos, together with historical documentation, for BMF review for eligibility.

Child Survivors

The Claims Conference has been advocating for several years for recognition of the special needs of survivors who were children at the time of the Holocaust. We placed a special emphasis on it this year, led by Colette Avital of our negotiating team. In the negotiations last Thursday, the German government committed to take a “sympathetic” approach toward the issue in discussions set for next fall. The Claims Conference and German government will be discussing the unique traumas and late-onset symptoms associated with children who endured the Holocaust. We hope the special conference on child survivors scheduled for Berlin in the end of

August will provide special impetus for our efforts to provide assistance to child survivors.

Income Limit Raised

Applicants for monthly pensions from the Article 2 Fund are allowed a higher annual income (\$25,000, previously \$16,000), as of July 1, 2013, to meet the income eligibility requirement. This figure had not been changed since 1995, and will make many more people eligible for Article 2 Fund pensions.

As you know, for the first time, negotiations with the German Finance Ministry were held in Israel. It was a terrific opportunity for the German delegation to see first-hand how the compensation they provide is life-changing for individual Holocaust survivors. We took the German delegation into the homes of Holocaust survivors who are receiving homecare; we visited Senior Day Center and met with a group of survivors; and we visited a soup kitchen in which Holocaust survivors are receiving a hot daily meal - all of these programs are funded by the Claims Conference. Immediately preceding the negotiations, our full delegations spent nearly three hours visiting in Yad Vashem, with our survivors sharing their personal experiences. The negotiations themselves lasted nearly 5 hours, without a break, and were very intensive.

The historic work of the Claims Conference still continues, and I am proud to contribute what I can to help Holocaust victims. We are seeing Germany's continued commitment to fulfill its historic obligation to Nazi victims. This ensures that Holocaust survivors, now in their final years, can be confident that we are

endeavoring to help them live in dignity, after their early life was filled with indescribable tragedy and trauma.

The impassioned involvement of our negotiating delegation – Holocaust survivor leaders Roman Kent, Ben Helfgott, Marian Turski and Uri Chanoch; Amb. Reuven Merhav, Rabbi Andrew Baker and Amb. Colette Avital; and Claims Conference Executive Vice President Greg Schneider and staff Karen Heilig, Christiane Reeh, and Konrad Matschke – play a significant role in convincing Germany of its moral responsibility to aid elderly Holocaust survivors.

Best regards,
Stu Eizenstat

In 2013, the Claims Conference is supporting homecare for 56,000 Nazi victims around the world. We know the need has not yet peaked, as all the survivors who remain alive are increasingly elderly, with many growing more fragile and vulnerable. In addition to the 56,000 Nazi victims who are receiving Claims Conference-funded homecare, there are an additional 90,000 Holocaust survivors worldwide who receive other welfare services - funded mainly by the Claims Conference Successor organization, but also with the aid of the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, the Swiss Banks Settlement, the Austrian government and others - such as food, medicine, socialization programs and transportation.

With this new agreement, the Claims Conference will be able to both increase the number of beneficiaries, thus eliminating waiting lists of survivors for homecare, as well

as increase the number of hours per person to a minimum level of dignity.

These results speak volumes to the skill and commitment of Ambassador Eizenstat, who has spent much of his lengthy U.S. government and private career providing justice for Holocaust survivors. His compassion for survivors is boundless; but, what makes him unique is his willingness to use his considerable intellect and extraordinary negotiating abilities for their betterment. Our deepest appreciation goes also to Roman Kent. Surely, Roman participates in the negotiations, but his secret weapon is the close relationship he has built with the German government authorities based on their respect for him and his willingness to call, write, travel, whatever it takes to get the job done. Indeed, our entire negotiating team is to be congratulated. I, too, also want to thank Greg Schneider and the staff, especially Karen Heilig. Tens of thousands of Nazi victims will live easier lives and in more comfort because of their efforts.

The cornerstone of our work is ensuring survivors are able to live out their lives with dignity. With this new agreement, we have secured funding for continued homecare services that grant survivors the care and recognition they deserve. The well-being of survivors is of the utmost importance, and I am proud of the Claims Conference's accomplishments.

Julius Berman