

## Impact of the Coronavirus on Jewish Communities: Global Roundtable with Ministry of Diaspora Affairs & Jewish Agency to Examine Challenges Facing Jewish Communities Around the World

*(release from the Government Press Office)*

*Isaac Herzog and Tzipi Hotovely initiated a global roundtable of global and regional Jewish organizations to assess the impact of the coronavirus on Jewish communities and prepare a plan for their rehabilitation on the day after*

Jerusalem, May 11, 2020 — For the first time since the coronavirus crisis erupted, a global roundtable, initiated collaboratively by The Jewish Agency for Israel Chairman Isaac Herzog and Minister of Diaspora Affairs Tzipi Hotovely, will convene to assess the damage caused by the virus on Jewish communities and to prepare a plan to rehabilitate those harshly impacted on the day after.

Toward this end, Herzog and Hotovely have called upon Jewish organizations worldwide that deal with communal and welfare-related matters to join the roundtable. The forum plans to convene online for the first time on May 26 and identify situations of significant hardship requiring a systemic response, and the communities' needs looking ahead to the post-pandemic period. The forum will also discuss preparation for a possible second wave of a COVID-19 outbreak and identify new opportunities, initiatives and communal structures, as well as ways to help redesign communities.

In their invitation to the heads of Jewish communities and organizations, Herzog and Hotovely wrote: "The coronavirus crisis has impacted the entire world and has had dramatic ramifications on worldwide Jewish Communities, on community leadership, community resilience and its ability to provide services, communal life and in some cases even risks to the very existence of the community. While the communities' rehabilitation is expected to be a lengthy process, as the implications of the crisis are considerable and multi-faceted, this period could actually create opportunities for new ideas, initiatives and communal structures, perhaps reshaping Jewish life in the post-corona world."

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there have been many reports of the damage it has caused to Jewish communities around the world, and the significant number of people who have died. According to data collected by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and The Jewish Agency for Israel, the number of people who have died in Jewish communities worldwide is in the thousands, and in many areas, Jewish institutions are completely paralyzed or in the process of collapse.

Last month, The Jewish Agency for Israel, together with Keren Hayesod and Jewish Federations of North America, launched a \$10 million loan fund to help Jewish communities impacted by the virus. Since then, dozens of applications have been received from more than 15 countries, and The Jewish Agency for Israel is now seeking additional donations toward expanding the fund.

The roundtable is expected to convene every two weeks until there's a global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be made up of non-governmental organizations that focus primarily on community and social welfare. It will be headed by Minister of Diaspora Affairs Tzipi Hotovely and Jewish Agency for Israel Chairman Isaac Herzog.