

SOCIAL SCENE

USA delegation.



Uruguay delegation.



'Beyachad, Ubuntu, Together', come to life at ICJW Convention

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW EMDON, DANA GOLDBERG AND JANN SAVEN

FROM May 9 - 13, Cape Town welcomed more than 200 women from over 23 countries to the 21st Quadrennial Convention of the International Council of Jewish Women.

It's been a good year for South Africa and Cape Town in particular in hosting large-scale international events. This convention, a highlight on the international Jewish communal calendar, was no exception.

Held at the President Hotel and hosted by the South African Union of Jewish Women, it was convened ostensibly to vote on key issues and support the mandate of the Union. It was also an important forum to catch up with old friends, make new ones and acknowledge that, despite language and geographical differences, Jewish women share much in common as women, mothers, partners and communal workers.

The conference served as a reminder of the impact and importance of the Union, which has an impressive global membership and is now represented at the United Nations.

Established in 1912, the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) is a collective of 52 women's organisations in 47 countries, working for social justice and welfare for all.

It provides a voice for Jewish women around the world and a platform for the issues that concern their families and communities.

A magnificent opening gala dinner at the Cape Town Civic Centre, hosted by Cape Town Executive Mayor Dan Plato, reflected the warm hospitality of Capetonians.

With the hum of Russian and

Spanish translation in the background, the Convention quickly got down to the business of supporting, developing and challenging its members to continue their work.

Presentations on working effectively as a group, using a lion pride as a guide, contemporary anti-Semitism, Israeli-Diaspora relations, human rights, young Jewish leadership and the environment, were of particular interest.

The session entitled, "Women as Leaders of Social Change", saw Helen Lieberman presenting delegates with the extraordinary journey of her award-winning NGO Ikamva Labantu and offering them a unique opportunity to visit The Rainbow Centre, one of its township-based projects.

Professor Marion Jacobs, dean of UCT's faculty of Health Sciences, and psychologist Nomfundo Walaza, CEO of The Desmond Tutu Peace Centre and former head of The Cape Town Trauma Centre, inspired the audience with an insight into their work and challenges. Debbie Silver reported on her and Joan Rubenstein's inspiring work with women at Pollsmoor Prison.

Also on the agenda were presentations and workshops on human trafficking, domestic violence, HIV/Aids and the media's impact on the psycho-social experience of teen girls.

Epic journeys into Africa by the travelling rabbi, Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, drew the audience into the unique experience and challenges of sub-Saharan Jewish communities.

Delegates were offered the opportunity of joining the Convention's "Habitat for Humanity Legacy Build", which will see one, possibly two, homes built locally by UJW members later in the year.

Of great interest were reports by Union affiliates from across the

globe on a multitude of life changing programmes and projects. This gave a powerful impression of the breadth of work done by affiliates and the impact of the Union as a whole.

A spectacular closing gala dinner, where outgoing ICJW President Leah Aharonov (Israel) inducted Sharon Gustafson (USA) as the incoming president, added the bells and whistles to what organisers and attendees have reported as a most successful convention.

Armed with fresh ideas for new projects, and support for existing ones, delegates returned to their respective countries inspired to continue their work.

They promised not to wait for four more years before seeing each other again, swapped Skype and e-mail addresses, and bade farewell with hugs and some tears.

The Convention's motto: "Beyachad, Ubuntu, Together" was experienced powerfully in a spirit of sisterly engagement and genuine warmth.



ICJW committee.



UK delegation.



Cape Town executive committee.



Oudtshoorn delegation.



Sharon Gustafson (new president ICJW); Reed Gustafson; Leah Aharonov (former president ICJW); and Yaakov Aharonov.

ICJW has a new president

SHARON SCOTT Gustafson of the United States (pictured) has become the 19th president of the International Council of Jewish Women for a four-year term.

In a media release the ICJW says Gustafson, a Vassar College graduate, worked as director of personnel for the Planned Parenthood organisation in Rochester, New York, and later as director of corporate services for Deltanet Inc in San Francisco.

She has served on the boards of directors of the Bureau of Jewish Education, the Jewish Community Federation and the



Home for Jewish Aged in Rochester, New York, and as vice-president of the women's division of the Jewish Community Federation of San José, California, where she now lives.

She was the first honoree of the local "Women Making a Mark" award, in recognition of her significant leadership commitments to community organisations. She has always been actively involved with the issues of civil and human rights, especially those which affect women and families.

As president of ICJW, Gustafson intends to reinforce ICJW's focus on the status of

women, the worldwide fight against human trafficking and domestic violence, and campaign for religious equality for women.

She explains: "As our organisation approaches its centenary, it is shocking to see that many of the causes for which we are campaigning today have been on the ICJW agenda for almost 100 years: the white slave trade, known today as human trafficking; equal pay for men and women; the scarcity of women in public life; and protecting women and children from all forms of violence."

"Today, more than ever before, globalisation and modern technology can empower women to combine their influence in order to make real changes, in their own communities and worldwide."