

## SA Jewry Mourn the loss of Shimon Peres: Visionary & Man of Peace

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) and the IUA / UCF, together with the Israeli people and the broader international community, joins in mourning the passing of Shimon Peres, visionary world statesman, peace activist and inspirational founding father of the State of Israel. In a political career spanning more than seven decades, Peres combined selfless service to his own country and people, with striving for peaceful co-existence between Israel and its neighbours. In the words of Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress, he was at the forefront of those helping to build “a free, secure, and prosperous state in the ancient homeland of the Jewish people”.

For Shimon Peres, devotion to a worthy cause was the key to living a successful and fulfilled life. In his own words, “The smallest thing in life is the human ego. The greatest thing in life is serving a great cause. And to serve a great cause is to serve others”.

Peres was centrally involved in the conclusion of lasting peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, and was one of the architects of the 1993 Oslo Accords that launched the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. For his efforts, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994. Despite many setbacks and disappointments, he never despaired of the attainability of peace and to the very end devoted himself to helping make this a reality

In February 2016, in what was one of his very last international visits, Peres was brought to South Africa as a guest of the Jewish community. During his visit, he reiterated his belief that no conflict, no matter how intractable it appeared to be, was incapable of being resolved by peaceful negotiations. He also invoked the inspirational example set by his fellow Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela, with whom he enjoyed a warm personal relationship.

“I have a South African friend. I asked him, how did it happen?” He said: “My friend, in every South African person you will find a small Nelson Mandela. I wish every person will have inside him this small Nelson Mandela”.

Paying tribute to him earlier today US President Barack Obama noted that “Peres changed the course of human history”.

The Jewish community will be holding a tribute gathering in memory of Shimon Peres in Johannesburg and Cape Town tomorrow evening.