



ACBP and the Green Environment Fund

Israel, September 2012

On behalf of Israel's environmental movement, dozens of environmental organizations, the Green Environment Fund's partners and staff, I write to express our deep gratitude to the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies (ACBP) for their visionary and active role in fostering a cohesive, effective and vibrant green movement in Israel for the past 12 years.

Reading Israel's civil society map in the late 90's, ACBP was a pioneer in identifying the need for increased and strategic work on the environment. Together with the Nathan Cummings Foundation, Dorot Foundation and New Israel Fund, ACBP seized the opportunity and formed the Green Environment Fund (GEF) in 2001. ACBP led the formation of this unique consortium, secured its sustainability over the years by donating the largest sum from among the partners while providing the added costs, support and guidance required to establish and conduct the entire system and infrastructure.

GEF is a unique funding consortium of foundations guided by Jewish and humanitarian values, in support of Israel's environmental civil society movement. GEF partners, today including the Morningstar Foundation and the Samuel Sebba Trust, joined forces to leverage their respective support and distribute millions of dollars over the years, of which nearly six million was a direct contribution of ACBP. Throughout the years ACBP acted as a vested partner and mentor that attracted new players in support of Israel's environmental movement, all the while demonstrating respect and sensitivity to the voices and interests of all GEF partners. Furthermore, ACBP provided for the organizational structure and ongoing operational needs of GEF, including valuable office space in ACBP headquarters in Jerusalem –the CRB Foundation.

Since its inception, GEF has been a major supporter of Israel's major environmental work, at the grassroots and regulatory level, fighting ecological degradation through education, grassroots mobilization, and policy-change. Under ACBP's leadership, some of the highlights over the years include:

- 👉 **Mainstreaming environmental education in Israel:** GEF and ACBP established the Green Network which today runs the Minister's Program of Education and Environmental Protection in Israel, integrating green education into the core curriculum of over 700 schools, funneling additional millions into green education and establishing an environmental study track in teachers' training and engaging over 100,000 additional people.
- 👉 **Leveraging the green agenda on the municipal level throughout Israel:** A special collaborative effort of green foundations and organizations in Israel, led by GEF, injected major funding in 2008 into concerted efforts to advance



the green agenda during the crucial municipal election year. The collaborative efforts lead to clear re-prioritizing of major environmental issues as top local issues. Today, 32 municipalities, including all of the biggest ones and several Arab cities, have city council members elected on a “green” ticket and established “environmental units” reinforcing city-based green agendas, such as waste management and transportation.

- 👉 **Spearheading multi-sector initiatives to safeguard Israel's natural resources:** Over the years GEF and ACBP have engaged stakeholders from the public, private and civil society sectors to guarantee clean air and water for all citizens, to curtail rampant development threatening Israeli’s beaches and open spaces, all the while ensuring public participation in open and transparent democratic processes.
- 👉 **Seeding Israel's environmental movement on the grassroots level:** ACBP created the Sheli Fund, a unique micro grant program that supported hundreds of grassroots environmental activists and local ventures throughout Israel. The Sheli Fund fostered bottom-up change, such as community campaigns against polluting agents, complementing ongoing top-down agendas on the national level.

GEF acted as a home for the environmental movement, all the while laying the foundation for a more strategic, cohesive and inclusive approach. Under ACBP's visionary leadership, GEF concentrated not just on the issues themselves, but on the movement as a whole – investing in coalitions and umbrella organizations to maximize impact through networking and collaborations in order to build an effective movement. ACBP realized that funding activities is not enough, and dedicated additional resources for the organizational and financial capacity-building needs and growth of the environmental movement. Strategically, ACBP was instrumental in identifying the relationship between social and environmental activism, challenging GEF and Israel's environmental movement to transcend narrow approaches in favor of multidisciplinary ones that cut across sectors and issues

Throughout the years, the ACBP and the CRB Foundation team, headed by Jeffrey Solomon, Janet Aviad and Ehud Afek, have been a supportive, experienced and sensitive voice. This dedicated team led GEF in a strategic direction, and playing a major role in identifying and reinforcing new areas to invest and get involved in. This remains true today, during GEF's recent strategic evaluation process, that is focusing increased efforts and resources on advancing "ecological innovation" and searching for creative solutions to further environmental sustainability by advancing multi-sectored, coalition-based "think and do" creative strategies and practices for pressing environmental needs.

In gratitude,



Jay Shofet, Executive Director
Green Environment Fund
Jerusalem, Israel September 13th, 2012