



Laudatio

Your Excellencies,

Dear Members of the Academic Community,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our honor and pleasure to deliver the Laudatio to a special personality of the Israeli political scene and of the international Jewish life. Awarding the Doctor Honoris Causa title to Mr. Avraham Duvdevani is part of our University's permanent policy and preoccupation to open ourselves to the life outside the academic environment, towards society at large, and towards activities that have a political, social, and economic impact on wide communities.

Mr. Avraham Duvdevani is the Chairman of the World Zionist Organization, a most significant institutional structure for the Jewish life, from a historical point of view, that coordinated the giant effort of the Jewish people to build a modern Jewish state, to organize the rebirth of the state structure, after 2000 years of absence from the world map.

Mr. Duvdevani, as the Chairman of the World Zionist Organization, leads from a position previously held by exceptional personalities of the Jewish people, as well as of world politics, like Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizman, and David Ben Gurion.

Avraham Duvdevani was born in Jerusalem, on August 5th 1945, in a family belonging to the tradition of religious Zionism. His paternal grandparents were strongly rooted in the world of Polish Chasidism, and embraced the Zionist ideals, which led them to emigrate to Palestine in 1928. His father, Baruch Duvdevani, was active in the religious Zionist organizations, while



being part of the Zionist structure, and being in charge with issues related to the emigration of the Jews to Israel (Aliya).

Mr Avraham Duvdevani followed the tradition of his family and received the formal education at a well-known school in Jerusalem, which is part of the Bnei Akiva educational system, based on values like labour and study (Avoda ve Tora). During his military service at an elite unit of the Israeli Defense Forces – paratroopers, he participated in the liberation of East Jerusalem during the 1967 War, the most glorious battle of the modern Israel. After that, he studied history and sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, specializing in the history of the Jewish people and sociology of education. Following his studies, Mr. Duvdevani became a member of different structures of the most important Zionist organizations, holding positions like: Co-Chairman of the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael), Head of Settlement Division at the World Zionist Organization, General Secretary of the Bnei Akiva Youth Movement, European Representative of Youth & Hechalutz (Pioneering) Department of the WZO, and Head of Informal Education Track at Orot Israel College of Education.

In 2010, Mr. Duvdevani was elected Chairman of WZO, his current position. At the same time, he is part of the leadership of Claims Conference Organization and is member of the Board of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem.

The World Zionist Organization is a significant institutional body founded as a result of the initiative of Theodor Herzl, at the First Zionist Congress in 1896, in Basel. The World Zionist Organization used to be an original structure of governance aiming to coordinate optimally the worldwide efforts to build/rebuild a Jewish home, a Jewish state, having both a representative function as well as an executive one. It ensured the political connection with the representative power in the area, the Ottoman Empire, until 1918, and then with Great Britain, as well as with other external partners. A WZO delegation attended the Paris Peace Conference, following the World War I. Following the political evolutions and the crystallization of the Zionist movement



in 1923, the Organization remained a body relevant for strategy creation, while the executive power was transferred to a new body, the Jewish Agency (Sohnut).

After the Proclamation of the State of Israel (1948), the objectives of the WZO re-oriented towards the Aliyah, Zionist education, relations with Diaspora and combating Antisemitism. A very important department of the WZO is the Central Zionist Archive, the biggest and most modern archive in Israel, a place that cannot be missed by any endeavour regarding the study of the Zionist history and of the State of Israel. The 1951 Zionist Congress in Jerusalem decided to move the headquarters of the Organization to Jerusalem. The decision was in the same vein with the very desire of David Ben Gurion to set there the center of the Zionist Movement and of Jewish life, in general.

The WZO strongly supports Israel studies at a global level. In this context, let us remind you about the founding of Israel studies in the Eastern and Central Europe of a network. The Theodor Herzl Center for Israeli Studies in Bucharest, SNSPA, our center, was the first of its kind (founded in 2012). Later on, Prague and Cracow set up new such centers.

Besides Israeli studies, WZO was greatly involved in supporting Jews worldwide to come back to Israel – the Aliya. Mr Duvdevani was involved for years with bringing tens of thousands Jews to Israel. He ran the complex activity of absorbing them in the country and settle them in many communities all over the country. He was very effective in organizing the Hebrew language teaching activity for the newcomers. His contribution was crucial in finding solutions to a major financial crisis of WZO and secure financial means for many Zionist Federations throughout the world.

Mr Avraham Duvdevani belongs to the national religious wing of Zionism, who knows how to bring together secular and religious groups to work together for the benefit of Israel and world Jewry. Therefore, he represents a model, a political model of constructive behavior, of leaving aside differences for the common good. These very features highly recommend him to become



a part of our academic community and to become a role model for our academic and political behavior – in SNSPA and in Romania.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our endeavor here is the expression of the will of the Senate of the SNSPA to recognize exceptional work and professionalism. By awarding the title of Doctor Honoris Causa to Mr. Avraham DUVDEVANI, the Senate of the SNSPA not only recognizes his remarkable achievements so far, but also builds new bridges between the academic community of SNSPA, and of Romanian academia, and our distinguished guest, Mr. Avraham DUVDEVANI, who is becoming today member of the Romanian academic community. Thank you very much for your attention!

Professor Liliana POPESCU, PhD

Vice-rector of SNSPA