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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AN ONGOING COMMITMENT

Development is a global issue that requires immense attention, resources and political will by the international community's many forums and bodies involved in development such as the United Nations, ECOSOC, OECD, UN funds and programs as well as multilateral development banks and national development agencies. Guided by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted by the UN General Assembly, MASHAV's approach is to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainable development.

One sixth of the human race, 1.2 billion people, live in extreme poverty, defined by the UN as having an income of less than one dollar per day. More than 300 million of these people live in Africa, where they make up almost half of the total population. People living in extreme poverty suffer from starvation, lack of safe drinking water and proper sanitation, poor medical care and chronic unemployment. They cannot afford to send their children to school, and they frequently lack suitable clothing, shoes and shelter. Often the population is ravaged by HIV/AIDS and other diseases, by drought, civil war, and isolation from urban centers. Many live without hope for the future.

Coinciding with the UN Millennium Declaration, MASHAV's first priority is to take part in the international community's commitment to achieve the MDGs and halve poverty and hunger by 2015. Since its inception, MASHAV's work in the developing world has been guided by the basic approach that development work is organic in nature. It is impossible to concentrate efforts in one area, such as food security, without providing proper attention to other areas such as health care, community building and education. Only through a sustainable and comprehensive development program can measured results be obtained and the desired impact felt by those who need assistance the most. As no one country or aid agency can single-handedly tackle the causes leading to extreme poverty, the need to coordinate and combine efforts and resources is essential if the donor community and partner countries are to realize the MDGs.

MASHAV's activities focus primarily on areas in which Israel has a comparative advantage including agriculture and rural development, water resources management, micro-enterprise development, community development, medicine and public health, empowerment of women and education. At the same time MASHAV operates according to the needs and demands originating from the partner countries, as opposed to a supply-initiated program that might not be relevant and effective elsewhere. Programs are based on a "train the trainers" approach to institutional and human capacity building, with professional programs conducted in Israel and in-situ. Project development is supported by the seconding of short- and long-term experts, as well as on-site interventions. Since its establishment, MASHAV has promoted the centrality of human resource enrichment and institutional capacity building in the development process – an approach which has attained global consensus.

In its programs and philosophy, MASHAV adheres to the accepted international principles as stated, among others, in the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, the Monterrey Consensus, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Doha Conference on Financing for Development. The success of development work necessitates responsible and involved political leadership, either on the national or local level, and a cadre of locally based professionals capable of taking ownership, while adhering to regional, national and local development strategies and goals. Moreover, the approach of any development program must be comprehensive, inclusive and carried out in an integrative fashion, thereby endorsing a holistic approach to meeting all basic human needs. Israel's own development experience enables it to design comprehensive and integrative programs both for urban and rural settings, which are of critical concern to developing countries.

On May 10, 2010, Israel became one of three countries invited, unanimously, to become members of the Organization for International Cooperation and Development (OECD). When Israel gains full-fledged membership in the coming months, it will become part of an important organization dedicated to improving economic, social and environmental policymaking in the interests of citizens of OECD countries and of countries around the world. The OECD is – alongside the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – one of the three leaders in designing the architecture of the world's economy.

Joining the OECD brings benefits, advantages and obligations expressed through the country's Official Development Assistance. In this context, the goals of MASHAV's International Development Cooperation Program are very much in line with those of the OECD, including, among others, aid effectiveness and country ownership. The economic crisis the world is facing today is a devastating addition to the food crisis, the energy crisis and the climate change crisis. I believe that MASHAV is best positioned to join forces with others in the global efforts to deal with these crises. We have to continue our efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through successful international cooperation and partnership. In more than 52 years of activity, over 260,000 professionals from 160 countries and territories have participated in MASHAV's professional programs. They have become agents of change embarked on the important mission of supporting sustainable development in their own countries, in order to contribute to a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world.