



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 15, 2019

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHEMI PERES INK AGREEMENT TO FOSTER STRONGER TIES
BETWEEN CHICAGO AND ISRAEL'S PERES CENTER FOR PEACE AND INNOVATION**

*This first-of-its-kind agreement seeks to foster collaboration in areas of inclusive innovation
and entrepreneurship*

The City of Chicago and the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation today entered into a memorandum of cooperation to foster stronger collaboration, particularly with respect to technology, innovation and entrepreneurship. It is the first such international partnership for the Peres Center, which was founded in 1996 by Shimon Peres, Israel's ninth president, three-time prime minister, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994.

"Shimon Peres believed in the transformative power of technology and innovation as a pathway to peace," said Mayor Emanuel. "Chicago is a global leader in innovation, and stronger ties with researchers and entrepreneurs everywhere will help keep our city on the leading edge of discovery and help create a more inclusive, connected and peaceful world."

Chemi Peres, Shimon's son and a leading businessman and philanthropist in Israel, serves as chairman of the Peres Center. The Center is dedicated to advancing Peres's vision of lasting peace and advancement in the Middle East through tolerance, economic and technological development, innovation, cooperation and well-being.

"In today's interconnected world, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship can and should be harnessed to build bridges between people and nations, promote prosperity for all, and help create a better tomorrow," Chemi Peres said. "At the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation we envision and work toward an Israel and a region where people from all walks of life come together in cooperation and partnership and innovatively and proactively design their future – a future of peace. It is therefore fitting to establish the Peres Center's first international agreement in the city of Chicago, with its global outlook and reach, but uniquely American story."

Ivo Daalder, president of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and former U.S. Ambassador to NATO, praised the agreement: "To continue to grow and meet the aspirations of all its residents, global cities like Chicago are increasingly forging direct links

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

with the rest of the world,” Ambassador Daalder said. “This unique new partnership between the City and the Peres Center is another striking example of how Chicago engages the world with benefits for all.”

World Business Chicago is tasked with implementing and facilitating the agreement. “Chicago and Israel have long shared a strong bond, solidified by our sister city agreement with Petach Tikva in 1994 and the Chicago Tel Aviv-Yafo Economic Partnership in 2017,” said Andrea Zopp, president and CEO of World Business Chicago. “World Business Chicago looks forward to further growing our relationship by working with the Peres Center to implement this new agreement.”

The memorandum, which will be signed by Mayor Emanuel on behalf of the City of Chicago and Chemi Peres on behalf of the Peres Center, states as its central purpose:

Innovation and entrepreneurship have profound impacts on local communities and economies. They can fuel growth and impact trajectories of individuals and neighborhoods. Chicago and Israel are leading centers for both innovation and entrepreneurship, and the desire of this memorandum is to establish enhanced linkages in these spaces.

The primary areas of collaboration will be:

1. Innovation Collaboration – The Parties will work together to create access points into the Chicago and Israeli ecosystems, with a particular focus on innovation and entrepreneurship. Collaboration will include but is not limited to:

- a. Facilitation of connections to corporate, academic, civic, and government leaders for the purposes of economic development through innovation and inclusion;
- b. Promotion of The Parties in the respective partner locations through appropriate channels;
- c. Organization of joint promotional activities in Chicago and Israel.

2. Community Development – Through each member’s areas of expertise The Parties will work to ensure that Chicago’s and Israel’s economic growth will have a positive impact across all local communities.

3. Knowledge Sharing and Partnership – The Parties will participate in continual knowledge sharing for ensured achievement of the stated goals of cooperation.

During his tenure, Mayor Emanuel has prioritized growing the partnership between Chicago and Israel, making trips to promote investment and innovation by Israeli companies in the City of Chicago. The Chicago metro area boasts one of the highest Jewish populations in the nation with nearly 300,000 Jewish residents.

In 2017, Mayor Emanuel and Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai signed the Chicago Tel Aviv Yafo Partnership, which advances collaboration between the two cities on economic development efforts, innovation and research, education and river rehabilitation projects. Mayor Emanuel has also been a vocal proponent of the University of Illinois' Discovery Partners Institute, which has reached collaboration agreements with both the University of Tel Aviv and Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Last month, Mayor Emanuel and the Chicago Department of Aviation announced the return of nonstop service by El Al airlines between Chicago O'Hare International Airport and Ben-Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv.

Chemi Peres is a Managing General Partner and Co-Founder of Pitango, Israel's largest VC fund. In 1992, he founded the Mofet Israel Technology Fund, an Israeli venture capital fund publicly traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. He served as a pilot in the Israeli Air Force for 10 years, and has served on the boards of several NASDAQ companies, such as AudioCodes, BackWeb, Magic Software Enterprises, Aladdin, VocalTec, Orckit Communications and Koor Industries, among others.

###