

Ronald S. Lauder

President, World Jewish Congress

International philanthropist, investor, art collector, and former public servant, Ronald S. Lauder has served as president of the World Jewish Congress since June 2007. President Lauder also demonstrates his deep commitment to his Judaism through a wide range of other philanthropic endeavors that reach around the world.

As president of the WJC, Amb. Lauder has met with countless heads of state, prime ministers and government representatives in advancing those causes that are of most concern to Jews and Jewish communities internationally. He firmly believes in the importance of supporting Israel, especially in times when the State, and its citizens are under attack, whilst also encouraging and aiding the development of vibrant Jewish communities around the world.

From 1983 to 1986, Ronald S. Lauder served as United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Affairs. In 1986, he was appointed by President Reagan as US Ambassador to Austria. During his posting there he built strong diplomatic bonds between the two countries while personally repudiating Kurt Waldheim who became Austrian President.

Amb. Lauder's experience in Austria heightened his deep appreciation of, and his commitment to, his Jewish heritage. Afterwards, he sought to revitalize Jewish life across central and eastern Europe in communities that had been devastated by the Holocaust, and remained suppressed under Communism. In 1987, he established The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, which now supports 37 Jewish schools, camps and community centers in Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. Amb. Lauder's efforts have awakened thousands of Jewish youngsters to their Jewish heritage.

Amb. Lauder also created an International Student Exchange Program between Jewish high school students in New York City and Vienna, which has now grown to include students from Berlin, Budapest, Prague, St. Petersburg, Sofia and Warsaw.

In 1997, Amb. Lauder was elected as President of the Jewish National Fund and after a successful 10-year tenure became Chairman of the Board. From 1999 until 2001 Amb. Lauder served as Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Amb. Lauder's passion for art and his commitment to justice led him to create and head the Committee for Art Recovery that has helped establish international laws to recover art stolen by the Nazis during World War II. The Committee continues to help retrieve important paintings and deliver them to the heirs of their rightful owners.

In 2008, Amb. Lauder was elected as President of the World Jewish Restitution Organization.

President Lauder also serves as Chairman of the Jewish Heritage Council; Director of the International Board of Governors of the International Society for Yad Vashem; Member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council; Member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Theological Seminary; Member of the Board of Directors of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; Member of the Board of Trustees of the Anti-Defamation League Foundation; Member of the Board of Trustees of The Abraham Fund; Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Sakharov Archives at Brandeis University and Member of the International Board of Governors of the Tel Aviv Museum. Amb. Lauder has been a major supporter of The Shalem Center since its founding. He is also an Honorary Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art.