



Pan American Maccabi Games: Unifying the Jews of Latin America

By: KKL- JNF - Mexico

KKL-JNF and Maccabi World Union have consolidated a collaborative partnership for the organization of next 2019 - Pan American Maccabi Games to be held in Mexico.

Maccabi World Union is a very important organization for the Jewish people, especially in Latin America. Maccabi activities are Zionist, that's why the JNF is a natural partner to continue working and intensifying the connection between the Diaspora Jewry and Israel.

Today we live in a globalised world, where communication is just a finger's distance away. When thinking about the Pan American Maccabi Games, in which participate today more than 4,000 Jewish athletes from across Latin American countries, we can think about the essence of these Games whose main topic is Sport.

The Maccabiah Games celebrated in Israel were the result of a proposal presented by Yosef Yekutieli to Menachem Ussishkin, KKL-JNF's Chairman, in 1929 during the Maccabi World Congress: "Holding a First Congress of Athletes from all Maccabi Centers in the world". The proposed date was the year 1932, marking 1800 years of the Bar Kochba Revolt. This proposal came true, and in 1932 the first Maccabiah Games in the world took place in Tel Aviv, before the creation of the State of Israel.

Shortly after, the Second World War broke out, and in the postwar period, the Jewish communities from around the world faced many difficulties: in the European countries, the communities lost their stability and were considerably reduced, while the Latin American communities suffered great changes due to the waves of immigrants coming from Europe to settle on this side of the world.

During this period, all the communities were devoted to improve the quality of life of the Jews in each of the countries, trying to leave the war behind and look ahead to the future, and build relationships among the Jews of the world, towards the consolidation of the State of Israel in 1948.

This is how Maccabi World Union became very important in the sport domain. Finally, in 1964, the first Pan American Maccabi Games were held in the city of Buenos Aires.

Today, some 21 countries will participate in this great event, bringing together Jews from the Diaspora every 4 years, making new connections and expressing their Jewish identity through sports.