

THIS PIECE IS PART OF BOARDROOM'S LEGACY SERIES, WHERE WE TAKE A DEEPER JOURNALISTIC DIVE INTO HOW CONGRESSES, CAN LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY IN THE CITIES OR REGIONS WHERE THEY'RE HELD... AND BEYOND.

Leaving a Space Legacy in Jerusalem

In the Old City of Jerusalem, there's a saying that each stone holds a piece of history. Perhaps that's because the city has a history spanning back thousands of years, from the time of the Judean kings and the Roman Empire through to the Islamic period and modern State of Israel. But while Jerusalem's past is one draw, the city is looking to its dynamic institutions and research centres to build its future. Highly esteemed conferences in sectors like space are leaving a legacy that extend far beyond Jerusalem's famed Western Wall, impacting the city and influencing others around the globe with ground-breaking new developments.

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Sitting at the centre of the world, connecting the East and West and making it an easy destination for delegates to descend upon, Jerusalem has earned a reputation of being a place worth visiting for more than its holy history. But looking beyond and to the future, the city is also seen as one of the top emerging technological hubs, while Israel as a whole has rightfully earned the nickname The Startup Nation since it boasts the largest number of per-capita startups and venture capital investments in the world.

Not only is Jerusalem buzzing in terms of business, the city is also home to one of the top academic institutions, The Hebrew University, which ranks among the 100 most outstanding in the world. Along with its affiliate Hadassah Medical Center, the university conducts over one-third of Israel's academic research and 43% of the country's biotechnology research. The city acts as an academic powerhouse and leader in life sciences, with revolutionary research in the realm of regenerative medicine and stem cell experimentation, drawing the likes of scientists and physicians from around the country—and world—to showcase their findings in the same fields.

But one sector that's really gaining momentum is space, with a legacy that can still be felt after the 66th annual International Astronautical Congress (IAC)—the world's leading space conference—was held in Jerusalem in 2015.

IAC 2015

Hosted by the Israel Space Agency at the Jerusalem Israel Convention Center (ICC), the IAC brought together over 2,000 participants from 60 different countries, with more than 100 exhibitions and presenters, including American aerospace and defence company Lockheed Martin; Airbus Defence and Space; the Italian Space Agency; the South African National Space Agency; Korea Aerospace Research Institute; the Romanian Space Agency; Israel Aerospace Industries; and the UK Space Agency. *"This annual event served as a backdrop for the global space sector allowing governmental, academia and private industry leaders to envision, implement and complete collaborative projects for the betterment of science and humanity,"* explained Danny Danon, who was Minister of Science, Technology and Space at the time of the conference.

Inside IAC 2015

- When: 12-16, October 2015
- Where: Jerusalem Israel Convention Center (ICC)
- Host organisation: International Astronautical Federation (IAF)
- Attendance: More than 2,200 delegates from 60 countries/Over 100 exhibitions and presenters/2,500 technical presentations about space
- Economic contribution to Jerusalem: €6-10 million
- Legacy: Five agreements signed, including one between NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and Israel Space Agency Director Menachem Kidron to strengthen space activities between the two agencies

The International Astronautical Federation (IAF) has a history stemming back more than 60 years, before the first satellite was even sent into space, and the IAC is its largest annual conference. In similar style to the Olympic Games, the federation, which

includes founding members like France's Groupement Astronautique Français (French Astronautical Group) and the United Kingdom's British Interplanetary Society, selects the next destination for the IAC four years in advance. Israel first played host to the IAC in 1994, but a lot has changed in the past two decades as the country has expanded its research and development in space sciences. *"The fact that this space convention was chosen to take place in Israel is a tribute to Israeli sciences leading and advancing in the field. Israel may only be 68 years of age but the country is in the front row for entrepreneurship and new developments internationally."* Israel's current Minister of

Science, Technology, and Space Ofir Akunis said in a statement regarding IAC 2015.

Israel's Space Program was created in the 1980s, when the country was the eighth in the world to successfully launch satellites into space. Despite security challenges, a shortage of resources and a

small budget, the country has emerged as a leader in the development, production and operation of satellites, specialising in technology for small satellites. It's this type of cost-effective, high-performance technology that has placed Israel in the international spotlight with imaging satellites that are considered top in the world. Now Israel is one of the few states boasting the technology to independently launch unmanned missions into space. *"Jerusalem really binds the forefronts of science, technology and future exploration,"* says Menachem Kidron, who at the time of the conference served as the Director General of the Israel Space Agency and helped win the bid for the IAC in Jerusalem.

A few years earlier, the IAF had considered Tel Aviv as a locale for the IAC, Kidron explains. Eventually, however, a proposal was drafted for Jerusalem, which was judged to be the ideal location owing to its fascinating history, excellent touring and entertainment options for conference-goers, and good infrastructure. In choosing Jerusalem, the Israel Space Agency addressed another factor at the forefront of the decision-making process: security. Around that time, the capital was dealing with terrorist attacks, but in the few days the executive director of the IAF toured Jerusalem, he felt safer than he had in Turkey, where the previous conference was held.

"Nowhere in the world is safe from terrorism but in Jerusalem—and Israel in general—we know how to handle it," Kidron explains. During the conference, it was advised against going into the Old City alone, so participants were offered guided tours with security—which most ended up not taking. Instead, they ventured out on their own despite the warnings and not only felt safe, they were in awe by what they came across, setting out to explore another landmark—or even locale in Israel—each day. *"One by one, professors and other participants came up to me and told me that when they faced the Western Wall or that when they were in one of the churches, they were almost crying because of the power they felt in these places,"* Kidron says.

The inspiring spirit of Jerusalem, the impact on authorities, and the connection and cooperation with institutes all over the world was tremendously important in creating a lasting legacy.

Building a Legacy

When the IAF's 300 members from 62 different countries voted on Jerusalem, which was up against destinations in Mexico and Turkey, they gave the city a chance to clean up its act. The city once had a shortage of meeting space, but now venues can easily accommodate high-profile conferences like the IAC with room to host up to 4,000 participants easily.

"Jerusalem has had its ups and downs, and so for many years it wasn't so popular due to the political situation. But recently, there have been a lot of developments in the city," explains Eyal Halevy, Co-Managing Director of Paragon Group. *"I can see the changes in Jerusalem thanks to the development of infrastructure, transportation within the city, and even gastronomy—which gives the city a lot of flair. There is the 'wow' effect, combining the three religions, the history, the culture and the night-life. Jerusalem itself is really a place to be."*

Over the course of the week-long IAC, 2,000 participants (which included 40 heads of space agencies and astronauts like legendary Buzz Aldrin, the second person to walk on the moon) took part in over 2,000 professional lectures and poster presentations. Five different agreements were also signed, including one between NASA and the Israel Space Agency. *"It was a nice start—or more than a start—of putting space in the forefront and increasing cooperation between agencies,"* Kidron says.

In addition, two other important activities took place during the conference: international meetings for 50 members of Parliament and young professionals events, which included an international student competition. The conference also invited over 2,000 high school students from around the globe to witness the presentations and exhibitions in the hope of educating and inspiring the next generation of space scientists and engineers. Networking events were held both for young professionals, as well as for the global space community to meet and share knowledge, with the overall goal of fostering collaboration between space agencies, industry and research.

"From the business perspective, that's where I see the legacy," Halevy says. *"When we talk about business opportunities, that's where I feel that with almost any conference that's related to innovation—things like space or medicine—you see a lot of collaborations, meetings and bi-lateral cooperation. When you put a few thousand people together and create networking events, that on its own creates beautiful opportunities and after the congress, people still make profit—both intellectual profit and physical profit—out of the meeting."*

Startup Spirit

As Israel moves from a state-focused model of space exploration to one that centres more around private companies and non-profit organisations, the country is showing its startup spirit with innovative ventures like SpacEL, a non-profit launched by three young engineers who aim to land the first Israeli spacecraft on the moon. It's this type of entrepreneurial thinking that contributed to the success of IAC 2015.

"The inspiring spirit of the city, the impact on authorities like government ministers, and the connection and cooperation with institutes all over the world was tremendously important in creating a lasting legacy that could be felt worldwide following the conference," Kidron said. *"Just to be in Jerusalem, to feel the atmosphere, made a huge impact and I believe that's not going to be forgotten with time."* Even space industry experts like Buzz Aldrin's son, Dr. Andrew Aldrin, commented: *"It's good to be here and to see the entrepreneurial culture."*

Following the conference, countries like Japan, China and Russia acknowledged that they have a lot to learn from Israel even though the budget is much smaller than theirs. According to Kidron, these international agencies reacted with glowing reviews, saying: *"Your capability, how you work together—this is really a startup nation. We want to collaborate with you."*

More information on Jerusalem as a convention destination on www.jerusalemcvb.com.