

SSCC – naming ceremony – speech – Yaron Ziv

**Guests of honor, Mr. Michael Sonnenfeldt and family
Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mr. Lloyd Goldman
President, Prof Daniel Chaimovitz
Rector, Prof Haim Hames
Members of the Board of Governors
Faculty members
Honored Guests**

Our world is changing in front of our very eyes. Species become extinct, habitats are getting lost, and ecosystems are being degraded. With the temperature rise, the change in climatic systems and increase of extreme events, we quickly move toward food insecurity, large-scale immigration, demographic conflicts and political instability. We can no longer be passive; we can no longer accept that everything is going to be “just fine”; we can no longer assume that other people will do the job for us. WE MUST ACT. We must take the challenge of fighting the climatic and ecological crises NOW - for ourselves and for the next generations. This is true for all sectors, and even more so for the academic sector. As Einstein said: “Those who have the privilege to know have the duty to act”.

I am very proud to be a faculty member at Ben Gurion University of the Negev. BGU stands out for its excellence in environmental studies and as a leader in fields such as water, energy, agriculture and desertification. We have extensive and cutting-edge research on, among others, soil, water and air effects, biodiversity and ecosystem functions, policy and sustainable economics, social processes, and environmental health.

In order to (and I quote) “*Meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs*”, as the Brundtland Commission defined sustainability in 1987, we must take an interdisciplinary approach. There is an urgent need to expand integrative research of social, economic and environmental studies in order to combat the dramatic negative effects we already experience and even worse ones that may

come. This challenge can only be solved through collaboration, integration, innovation and mutual responsibility.

The School of Sustainability and Climate Change, and from today the Goldman-Sonnenfeldt SSCC, at BGU was established to bridge between different fields and bring together scientists from all academic units to promote new and innovative knowledge and perspectives. It creates new opportunities for sustainability-related developments, through interdisciplinary studies, novel national and international collaborations, new teaching programs and solution-based activities with both government and industry. We believe that cutting-edge research, education and community outreach will stimulate significant impact. For us sustainability means responsibility!

The G-S SSCC operates only a year now. 155 affiliated faculty members fuel the School with a lot of passion and motivation. We already have initiated diverse activities and academic events. We created new environmental study units and we are currently developing new Academic Degrees. We are involved in a variety of national and international initiatives. And this is only the beginning...

Our common challenge cannot be undertaken without resources and support. On behalf of the school, I would like to thank all our supporters, and most significantly, express our deep gratitude to Mrs. Katja Goldman and Mr. Michael Sonnefeldt and their family for their generous and remarkable contribution. Your support is inspiring and touching, and will allow us to make great progress. Thank you for believing in us. We will not let you down! Together, we will make this world better for our kids and grandkids!

Finally, I would like to thank our president, Prof Daniel Chaimovitz, for your vision and inspiration. We could not have done any of this without your encouragement and trust. I thank the university management for its dedication and commitment to the school and to a better future for us all.

THANK YOU!