

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--------|----------------------------|------------|------------|
| 23.77x18.53 | 1 | עמוד 9 | the jerusalem post - front | 14/06/2015 | 48292094-8 |
| נגישות לאנשים עם מוגבלויות עיווריי - 55430 | | | | | |

Diplomats, officials at UN enjoy kosher meal they can't see

Israel is both seen and heard at 8th Annual UN Commission for the Rights of People with Disabilities

• By STEPHANIE GRANOT
Special to the Jerusalem Post

NEW YORK – Thirty diplomats and UN officials from around the world accepted Israel's invitation to dinner last Wednesday night. The ambassadors enjoyed a champagne reception as the Israeli delegation warmly welcomed their guests and promptly proceeded to blindfold them.

It wasn't a kidnapping plot, but a dinner intended to provide a unique sensory experience and glimpse into the lives of those living with disabilities. The event was hosted by Israel's mission to the UN in cooperation with non-profit organization Access Israel, as this week's Commission for the Rights of People with Disabilities got under way.

Michal Ramon of Access Israel instructed the blindfolded dignitaries to place a hand on the person in front of them and find their way to what presumably was a table in the next room.



DIPLOMATS from Australia and Holland take a selfie at a UN dinner last week hosted by Israel that simulated sensory loss. (Israel Mission to UN)

“Our goal is to make the public aware of the need for accessibility,” said Ramon, who first developed the idea for a sensory dinner in Israel. “We need to make legislators understand that accessibility is the key to successfully integrating people with disabilities.”

Ambassador David Roet, Israel's deputy representative to the UN, and Perma-

nent Observer Moti Amihai Bivas donned blindfolds and joined fellow diplomats for a gourmet dinner, each of whose three courses would be consumed in the absence of one of their senses. The diplomats did their best to eat lasagna while blindfolded and a salmon rice dish while wearing oven mitts, and attempted to order dessert while not being able to

hear a word.

“That was the most frustrating”, said Jose Luiz, a diplomat from Argentina, as he picked salmon off his pants, “I wanted the chocolate cake. Not the cheesecake.”

Ramon had brought three people with her from Israel for the occasion. Oren, Shoval, and Orel related their respective experiences being blind, deaf, and in a wheelchair with

a newly appreciative audience.

Dinner ended with a flashmob-type music video produced by Access Israel and a hearty round of applause – hard-of-hearing style, of course (hands up by shoulders, palms out, shimmy).

The evening capped a day at the UN that couldn't help but underscore Israel's progress implementing the terms of the convention. Earlier in the day Israel hosted, together with the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN and Beit Issie Shapiro, an event titled, “The Technology Revolution: Innovating for a Better Quality of Life for People with Disabilities.”

Ambassador Roet highlighted Israeli innovations set to transform the lives of people with disabilities: “Over the past several years, we have witnessed the rapid development of technology and its ability to enable full participation of people with disabilities in society, and to ensure their voice is heard.”