

***Address by the Mayor of the Municipality of Metlika, Martina Legan Janžekovič,  
at the ceremony on the occasion of the Slovenia-Israel Friendship Day***

*Metlika, 19 July 2023*

*Dear President of the Republic of Slovenia, Nataša Pirc Musar,  
Dear Ambassador of the State of Israel, Ze'ev Boker.*

*Distinguished Guests and Other Visitors attending the ceremony on the occasion of the Slovenia-Israel Friendship Day, welcome among us. A sincere welcome to the Municipality of Metlika, in the territory of which a heroic tale took place during the Second World War, which united us in the noble fight against our common enemy. Today is an important day when we remember what has bound us in the past, what binds us today and what will bind us in the future. It is a great privilege to host the friends of Israel and Slovenia joined in the memory of the common struggle of both countries against Nazism and Fascism during the Second World War.*

*Hannah Szenes, the Israeli national heroine, had the heart of a poet and the strength of a rebel. This young woman was a person of action. She followed her calling and used her inner strength to withstand evil. She acted in accordance with her conscience and an excess of faith that she was doing the right thing. Szenes responded with the power of self-belief and trust in fellow human beings. She did not wait for miraculous help from elsewhere but took her own and our destiny in her hands. To this end, she serves as an inspiration to many. Szenes is our heroine, the symbol of selflessness and belief in the nobility of the human spirit.*

*Eighty years ago, people fought for freedom and today, in the arena of international relations, it frequently seems that we have learned nothing from the shocking historical events. We take freedom for granted and forget how high its price was in the past.*

*I wish us to recognise at least some of Szenes' noble character traits in ourselves, nurture them daily, share them unselfishly, maintain integrity, a sincere courage of the heart and self-sacrifice, and overcome fear and lamenting. In this way alone, we will be able to conquer the threat of egoism and discouragement and persevere as humankind.*

*Respect and cooperation between citizens and other nations is essential, as only tolerance among people and a clear vision of joint progress carry value and purpose.*

*Our common wish is to pay tribute to the memory of Hannah Szenes at this friendship event with gratitude, and to show deep connection and affinity between Slovenian and Israeli people and promote mutual cooperation in the fields of business, culture, science and sport.*

*Esteemed Guests, my wish is that you will fondly remember today's celebration, Slovenia, Bela Krajina and its people. We are pleased and proud to have been able to host this event and we will be honoured if you visit us again.*

*I wish you all a pleasant gathering and a joyous celebration of our friendship.*

*Thank you.*