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## A PERSONAL NOTE FOLLOWING A CHALLENGING YEAR

One cannot write this annual report without considering the broader Israeli national picture. It has been an unprecedented year for the State of Israel and for our university.

The war that was forced on Israel on October 7th has affected every aspect of our lives and presented significant challenges to university operations. Many of our students and staff have been recruited to reserve duty, which meant being away months at a time. Our location in northern Israel created a situation where many of our students and faculty were evacuated from their homes. Although the 2023-2024 academic year finally opened in January 2024, the University was closed for prolonged periods in the months that followed due to rocket attacks and Homefront Command mandates. Moreover, the war has threatened to fracture the interfaith and intercultural bonds amongst members of our community, which we have so carefully nurtured. Despite these challenges, I am proud to state that we have managed to stay the course, continuing to conduct excellent research and provide our students with excellent teaching. Moreover, we have taken proactive measures to nurture our coexistence on campus, encouraging dialogue and discourse.

The University's commitment to driving academic impact towards the world's challenges has not diminished. First in the Israeli higher education system to place the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as its roadmap, the faculty

and administration continue to extend the institution's commitment to human, societal, and environmental well-being. We have continued promoting impactful research, for example, through our 'Impact Project' grant program, which promotes the valorization of scholarly knowledge and the translation of research to societal and environmental solution. The winners of this year's competition – six multidisciplinary research projects, each leveraging cross-sectorial partnerships for combining research with practical utility - are described in this report. Similarly, we have continued promoting relevant, meaningful and impactful educational offerings. For example, we fund 'Impactful Education' programs through a yearly campus-wide competition, and this year's competition yielded five inspiring programs that blend quality education and public engagement.

We were pleased to see our efforts bear fruit, as reflected in the University of Haifa's performance in the 2023 Impact Ranking Competition. For the first time, we ranked among the Top 100 universities in the world by the Times Higher Education's Impact Rankings, maintaining our position as Israel's leader in sustainability. This competition is continually intensifying, with 2,100 universities participating this year (up from 1,700 last year). The rankings for each SDG reflect a university's achievements in terms of research, teaching, public engagement and internal operations. Among our standout achievements:

- SDG 4: Quality Education - top 70 globally for the second consecutive year (this year: 68th place)
- SDG 5: Gender Equality: top 20 globally for the second consecutive year (this year: 17th place)
- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth - top 100 globally for the second consecutive year (this year: 91st place)

- SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities - top 100 globally for the second consecutive year (this year: 97th place)
- SDG 14: Life under Water - top 50 globally for the second consecutive year (this year: 42nd place)
- SDG 15: Life on Land - top 100 globally for the second consecutive year (this year: 82nd place)
- SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions - top 40 globally for the second consecutive year (this year: 32nd place)

I am exceedingly proud of this report and I invite you to explore vignettes from the University of Haifa's activities that promote the sustainable development goals through our research, teaching, public engagement and the management of our internal operations.

With hope,



**Prof. Ofer Arazy**  
Director of Innovation & Sustainability