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Rabbonim from around the world gather for CER conference

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“Torah and Tradition in the Face of Contemporary Challenges” was the theme of the thirty-first convention of the Conference of European Rabbis which opened this week in Antwerp. It brought together close to three hundred community rabbis from Europe, Israel and beyond. High profile participants at the three-day parley were Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu, Av Beis Din of Europe; Dayan Menachem Gellei, Rosh Beis Din London; Rav Osher Weiss, Gaavad Darchei Hora'ah Yerushalayim; UK Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, other chief rabbis and many community rabbis from France, Moscow, Rome, Milan, Vienna, Istanbul, Brussels, Sydney. It even had participants from as far as Argentina.

Opening the convention was Rabbi Moshe Lebel, Rosh Yeshivas Torah Chaim in Moscow. Special liaison with Gedolei Yisroel, Rav Yisroel Friedman read Divrei Brocho from Rav Gershon Edelstein and Rav Chaim Kanievsky. This was followed by Divrei Brocho from Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi David Lau. Rabbi Dovid Cohen, Rosh Yeshivas Chevron in Yerushalayim then delivered the keynote address, speaking on the importance of safeguarding Torah Yisroel and our mesorah.

Rav Arye Ralbag, emeritus Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam and Gaavad of Igud Harabbonim of the USA



Dayan Ehrentreu addressing the convention PHOTO ELI ITKIN

and Canada introduced with warm words Rav Lau's high level halocho shiur on the division of assets in a divorce.

Rav Reuven Ohana, Chief Rabbi of Marselles, introduced the Rishon Letzion Rav Yitzchak Yosef who spoke about the halachic aspects related to the security of synagogues in Europe, explaining in depth the issues of security cameras in shuls on Shabbos, Shabbos lifts and more.

Both Israeli chief rabbis spoke about the seriousness of the topic of geirus while Rabbi Yehoram Ulman, Av Beis Din of Sydney, gave a special

shiur on the topic of conversion of children, bringing practical examples of exceptional cases from around the world and how different botei din and poskim have dealt with complicated issues, citing piskei halocho from Rav Moshe Sternbuch. Halachic and moral dilemmas on pre-natal diagnostic revolutions were discussed by Rav Osher Weiss, Gaavad Darchei Hora'ah and Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt. Chief Rabbi of Moscow and CER President gave a halocho shiur on the annulment of conversions of minors.

Rav Avichai Apel, Rav of Frankfurt,

introduced Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu, Av Beis Din of Europe who gave a shiur klali be'iyun on Sefiras Ha'Omer.

Rabbi Shmuel di Segni, Chief Rabbi of Rome, introduced Professor Sergio Della Pergola, expert in Jewish demographics, who spoke about trends in Jewish identity and coping with anti-Semitism.

At the close of the first day of the convention Chief Rabbi of France Rabbi Chaim Korsia and Chief Rabbi Di Segni presented the Rabbi Eliyahu Toaff prize to Dayan Ehrentreu for his lifetime contributions to Torah in general and to European Jewry in particular. Guest of honour was the highly distinguished Rav Moshe Dovid Lieberman, Chief Rabbi of Antwerp's Shomrei Hadass community.

Various workshops and speeches were also due to be delivered over the course of the convention on topics such as anti-Semitism, medicine, shechita and halocho, providing much inspiring Torah knowledge for community rabbis.

“The schedule is intense” said Dayan Elimelech Vanzetta, who is the Rov of Kehillas Ahavas Yisroel in Edgware, director of the Halachic Arbitration and Mediation Centre, posek of the United Synagogue Burial Society and Rosh Beis Din of Chile. “There is a great atmosphere of Kavod Hatorah, and a ruach of yeshiva days on the one hand, together with a lot of practical halocho which the rabbonim can take back with them to their communities!”

