

Chairman's Speech for the AGM on 28 September 2025

"Good afternoon, everyone

Past Chair Rumi Sethna, President Benafsha Engineer Mulla,
members and well-wishers

I am delighted to welcome you to the **45th Annual General Meeting** of the World Zoroastrian Organisation. It has been an **honour** to serve as your Chair over the past year.

Today, I'd like to reflect on our journey so far, share highlights from 2024, and look ahead to the future we are shaping *together*."

Our story and purpose

"WZO was founded in 1980, at a moment of real challenge for our community in Iran.

When these Zoroastrians faced uncertainty after the fall of the Shah, our founders, **Farhang Mehr and Shahpur Captain**, stepped forward to provide **refuge** and **hope**.

From those beginnings, WZO grew to serve Zoroastrians worldwide with chapters in India, USA, Canada and New Zealand.

Our mission, from our **early years** remains unchanged: to **protect the rights of Zoroastrians**, to **help those in need**, and to **promote understanding of our faith**."

So, let's see how we have performed in 2024 and have we ticked the boxes fulfilling these primary objectives.

Protecting rights

“We continue to help genuine individuals wanting to resettle in the West. Shahin Bekhradnia very much takes the lead in this area.

In Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, we financially supported their local Zoroastrian centre. Their representative Awat Darya visited our centre last year,

And importantly, we encouraged women and young men to practise as priests, ensuring our traditions are carried forward.

For this, I believe we can give ourselves a **tick** for meeting our first objective here.”

Charitable giving

“In 2024, WZO distributed more than **£88,000** in assistance in India and elsewhere — most of it for urgent medical needs.

We were also proud to sponsor the **World Zoroastrian Youth Leadership Forum 2.0** at the Asha Centre.

This financial assistance was a **78% increase** on the previous year.

But let me be honest. Donations and investment income did not match what we gave. We have had to dip into our reserves.

We cannot do that forever.

If we are to keep helping at this level, we need to grow our income and strengthen our fundraising.

That challenge is real— but it is also an **opportunity** for us to rally together.

And I believe we deserve another **tick**.”

Sharing knowledge and bringing the community together

“Our Centre has been **buzzing** in 2024.

Thanks to our Social Secretaries, we’ve hosted more events than ever before—seminars, lectures, cultural days, and of course, social gatherings like dinner dances and themed lunches.

Our Annual Seminar in June was once again **inspiring**, with speakers sharing **fresh perspectives** on Zoroastrian **history**.

In October, in conjunction with the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, we welcomed **Mobed Mehraban Pouladi**, the Head of the Iranian Mobed Council, at a very special event.

Beyond our own walls, we’ve joined interfaith dialogues, attended the Remembrance Day service, and took part in the local Freddie Mercury walks—always taking the opportunity to share the principles of our faith at each occasion.

For this, I think we deserve a **double tick**.”

Let me assure you that WZO will continue to **fulfil its primary objectives**, well into the **future**.

Now, an Appeal to all of you

“WZO exists for the community, but it can only thrive with your **active support**.

We need your **time**— to attend events, to volunteer, perhaps consider joining the Managing Committee. Encourage your family and friends to become Life members.

We need your **skills**—in IT, finance, event planning, property management, etc. Every talent strengthens us.

And yes, we need your **donations**. Whether large or small, regular or one-off, every gift helps.

Please also remember WZO in your wills.

Please do not regard us as just another charity. This is **your organisation, your legacy.**

Together, we can do so much more.”

Thanks

“I cannot end without thanking those who make WZO’s work possible.

First of all, my fellow Committee members who have helped to lessen my workload. Let me mention a few names

Our President, **Benafsha Engineer-Mulla**;

our Secretary, **Tirdad Sorooshian**;

our Treasurer, **Dinyar Modi**;

Our overseas representatives, **Homi Khushrukhan, Meher Amersey, Fariborz Rahnmoon, Kersi Shroff, Kayomارش Mehta, Darius Mistry**

our Social Secretaries, **Armaity Engineer and Manijeh Parki**, who unfortunately resigned earlier this year for personal reasons

our Interfaith and Religious Co-Ordinator, **Shahin Bekhradnia**

and **Rustam Dubash** for all his valuable legal and constitutional advice.

My thanks also to our resident priest, **Fali Madon** and his wife, **Anahita** who not only does all our administrative jobs but is totally invaluable at all our events.

Our special thanks go to our Past Chair, Rumi and Hilda Sethna for their generous donations each year, to the Firuz Madon Foundation, the World Zarathustrian Trust Fund, Dasturji Dr S H Kutar Benevolent Fund and the many individual donors—too many to name—whose generosity has sustained us.

And last but not least, to all of you, our members and well-wishers, for your trust, guidance, and support throughout the year.” Without your support, WZO could not exist.

Closing

“Friends, this is your community, your organisation, your future.

Together, let us continue to **protect, to serve, and to inspire** Zoroastrians around the world.

Thank you.”