



World Bridge Federation

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The Bridge Federations in the Third Millennium

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Promotion, organisation and extending the sphere of bridge is entrusted to the WBF, with regard to general co-ordination, and the Zonal Conferences and National Federations at a specifically operative level. In order to carry out their institutional tasks, the Federations principally need to understand and interpret all the various facets of society, all those complex matters that characterise society. A society which seems to have an ever-increasing range of leisure activities to choose from.

We cannot forget that the whole World, our countries and society in general are undergoing profound social, political and institutional changes, which have completely revolutionalized the status quo which used to condition our interests, our choices and our lines of action. Our Federations' task is, therefore, to attract the attention and the curiosity of our society to the growing importance that bridge is taking on in this process of innovation. This result can only be achieved by setting objectives and making all the instruments available for a decisive phase in bridge development.

The aim of all this, as you can well imagine, is to make the fascinating experience of bridge playing available to an ever greater number of people. An excellent opportunity has been opened up by three events which will act as a springboard towards furthering relations with the Administration, Sports Authorities and Public Schools. These are on the one hand the IOC's recognition of the WBF and, on the other hand, UNESCO's resolution with regard to the teaching of bridge as a school subject.

The fundamental principles that make up the basis of bridge meetings should be our starting point and, through corrective and

innovative adaptation of past experience, we can review and redesign a framework of principles, objectives and directions for all those who are interested or could be interested in the game of bridge.

This process of observation, which will allow us to design a constructive programme, requires precise identification of the functional problems involved in the promotion of bridge. It is, therefore, necessary to assess the role of bridge carefully and to identify the significance of our structural systems in relationship to the world around us in order to decide on the operational strategies to be adopted.

There are two important factors to be considered:

1. In today's society at the threshold of the third millennium, bridge takes on far greater importance than it ever did in the past.
2. There are a number of elements involved in bridge as a game and its organisation which are still valid and must be safeguarded in the future.

For these reasons we must be completely aware, and being convinced of the significance of bridge in society, not to mention the importance to be placed upon the principle of freedom within the association which regulate our activity.

The Role of Bridge in Society

This subject should be examined with particular regard to three factors: changes in society, the development of bridge in the interests of the community, bridge as a source of values

Changes in Society

Amongst the most striking and most important events that have taken place in the world and particularly in Europe, let me mention the profound political changes that have revolutionised cultures, the economical changes that have not only brought about recession and unemployment but are transforming the very structures, the demographic changes leading to the imminent situation of the elderly outnumbering the young, the social and environmental changes and finally, the changes in relationships between State and citizens, between individuals and groups and between these and the social environment. A great rift is being created between the reality of a nation, with the needs, demands and life styles of the people and the traditional structures, implements and methods employed in running a country and its social activities.

The Development of Bridge in the Interests of the Community

Objective data in our possession proves that bridge is becoming more and more popular all over Europe, although in some countries this growth is more rapid than in others. It is evident only by looking around us that the demand for bridge activities is increasing in our countries and that, in this respect, the aims of the Federation and those of the community are mutual; to satisfy this need, give support, encouragement and further development. This growing demand should be put into consequential relationship to the objective and subjective changes that characterise our context and may be identified principally in the progressive improvement to our standard of living; the new significance given to spare time; the increase in female participation as part of the process of emancipation; the extension of bridge playing to social categories once reluctant and not encouraged to participate, such as senior citizens or the disabled; the progressively positive reaction of families and schools to bridge as an activity for young people. Faced with this ever increasing social demand for bridge activities, which leads to a growing interest in competitive bridge, the Federations are duty bound to satisfy it by introducing adequate measures and taking suitable initiatives.

Bridge as a Source of Values

At last bridge has lost the stigma of being something taboo and evil which has unfortunately associated it to gambling and betting. This was accentuated by the harmful belief that it was a snobbish game for the elite. With great perseverance and goodwill we have managed to clear up this misunderstanding and explain the validity of the cultural and ethical development which is implicit to the game of bridge, with its fellowship and its social and educational features. Above all, we must start from the postulate that bridge, like music alone, is a real universal language which allows people of the most diverse tongues to communicate without difficulty. Secondly, we must illustrate why bridge is so different from other sports of the brain such as chess, in which the primary aim is to defeat the opponent and beat him. In other words chess is a war game. While in bridge the understanding created between partners is of greater importance. Therefore, communication, harmony and solidarity come first. Then there is the continuous self appraisal involved. Putting oneself to the test in a game that has no limits, where perfection can never be achieved, leaves the player open to improvement through progressive discoveries. There is the knowledge that nothing is absolute, but everything is relative and the player who makes the fewest mistakes prevails. Confidence and constancy are rewarded. Tribute is paid to inspiration and intuition. That is why the demand for bridge activities should be encouraged.

Let us consider the numerous beneficial aspects of bridge in the interests of the individual and the community:

1. Bridge in Education

Bridge can play an important role in education by integrating the primary functions of the family, school and other educational activities. It gives the opportunity to spend time with other people, to discover personal and group identities and to experience emotions. These considerations are particularly important in an organised society like ours which often leads to solitude, an internal solitude that is our great affliction nowadays, hitting our young people particularly and creating dramatic problems within the family and the school. Bridge is a wonderful cure for solitude and an equally wonderful cure for juvenile deviation. It is a powerful instrument both in recuperation and prevention. The nucleus of the game is the pair and this inevitably leads to fellowship.

It is a real "marriage" in which the partners have to get to know each other, understand and appreciate each other with mutual trust, entering into harmony and sacrificing elements of their personalities, toning down aspects of their characters, accepting decisions and initiatives and sharing experiences. In other words, they have to create a real partnership for better or for worse.

Another characteristic of bridge is that it reflects real life situations. Negative events must be accepted with serenity and discipline (bridge is a game in which it is normal to "go down").

The best strategy must be used to limit personal damages and opponents' advantages through a rational selection (defence bidding, safety play), the ability to make tactical sacrifices in favour of partner (sacrificing an honour to free partner's card), finding winning solutions which require timely technical choices (time factor, advancing a suit).

2. Ethics

Bridge is based on fair play, which means much more than keeping to the rules. This is a way of thinking, not just a behaviour pattern. It comprises complete acceptance of the rules and above all, rigorous respect of ethics: the fight against cheating or cunning tricks that stretch the rules to their limit. Therefore, it is implicitly a fight against violence, unequal opportunities and corruption. Those who do not keep in line and cannot accept these rules are automatically driven out. In a complex and competitive society like ours, bridge offers moments of reciprocal recognition, tolerance and respect of ethnic, social and cultural differences. Let us not forget that bridge does not take into consideration differences in race, culture, class, education, habits or position.

3. Social Aspects

Bridge is a social and cultural activity involving groups of people and this in itself signifies socialisation. Moreover, with its enormous range of sports associations and voluntary workers, it gives the opportunity to participate and take on responsibilities which are implicit features of the game itself. Similarly, at an international level, it can further understanding and friendship between nations. The great social function of bridge can be seen nowadays particularly in the experience to be gained in meeting people, relationships, collaboration. Solidarity, democracy and participation which all open the way towards civic responsibility and social commitment. The advantages for the disabled and senior citizens should not be forgotten. Bridge is undoubtedly a game that the disabled can play with everybody else without being at a disadvantage in any way. There are no problems, no magic is required and none of the much discussed architectural barriers exist. The disabled bridge player can measure himself on equal ground with able bodied players without feeling any of the humiliation that the particular condition may lead to. Above all, the disabled player can take part in competitive bridge without being ostracised and herded together with those in a similar predicament. It is not unusual to see disabled people playing in top competitions, perfectly at their ease and without any kind of inferiority complex.

The elderly not only have the opportunity to keep their mental faculties alert, instead of allowing them to decline after retirement and a progressive lack of direct interests, but they can also keep in touch with the younger generations.

They can talk to them, get involved in their problems, even speak their language, feel on equal ground and overcome that terrible oppression that comes from feeling "out of the game". One of the exclusive features of playing bridge is the satisfaction and feeling of success it can give all life long, unlike other sports or recreations which are limited to specific age groups.

4 Political implications

Like other sports, there is a demand for bridge and also a right to play it. For this reason, it should receive due attention from the public authorities. Objectives regarding promotion measure the powers of initiative of those interested in its promotion and qualification with the relations to be developed between public authorities and the bridge movement. Close collaboration between public institutions and bridge structures is absolutely vital, according to the principle of complementary functions. The IOC and UNESCO have recognised the validity of these postulates following

the example of many national governments who have been aware of all the above mentioned considerations for some time. In many countries, the governments offer contributions and support of primary importance to the Bridge Federations, thus establishing the fundamental synergy for the development and promotion of the discipline. In many countries the Local Authorities and above all the Ministry of Education, as well as the National Olympic Committees have given the Federations the opportunity to develop extremely ambitious projects.

Having briefly outlined the role of bridge, let us now examine the

Significance of the Bridge Clubs

This significance derives from a series of elements which may be summarised as follows:

Organisational Features

The particular organisational features of bridge, based on free sports clubs with voluntary workers, have proved to be extremely valid. It thus follows that the clubs should be considered as the main support and driving force behind the development of bridge.

Functions and Responsibilities of the Bridge Clubs

The clubs must be officially recognised as being solely responsible for the direction and the management of bridge. They must be guaranteed organisational, technical and financial autonomy, particularly with regard to putting all the funds available back into bridge.

Correct Procedures and Quality

All technical and methodological aspects of bridge must be promoted and organised correctly by qualified staff in order to ensure the greatest benefit for its players.

Safeguarding the Ideals and Values of Bridge

It is everyone's duty, at all times, to safeguard the most authentic ideals which distinguish bridge as a sport by calling upon public opinion, mass media, the world of culture and the bridge movement to affirm the real values of bridge and to fight against all forms of exasperation and degeneration in organisation and practice.

Democratic Management and Participation

The management of bridge at all levels must be founded on democratic principles and transparent criteria with the participation and joint responsibility of all the components of the bridge movement.

In the light of the principles dictated by the two above mentioned postulates, it is necessary to take a brief look at

The Situation of Bridge at National Level

Which is articulated in three main areas: a) the promotion and development of bridge, b) the bridge system and how it operates and c) problem areas

(a) Promotion and Development of Bridge

There are four factors involved which allow an analysis to be made; bridge statistics, top results, structure and organisational capacity, extension of the territorial organisation. Obviously, each country will have to analyse its own data. (As an example, and in the hope that this will be useful, I would like to make some brief references to the Italian experience).

Bridge Statistics

It is essential that each country should analyse the relevant data comparing the situation over a reasonably long period of time, for example five years, in order to obtain a statistically valid reference. The analysis should cover the various categories of membership: men, women, senior, junior, youngsters, beginners, school pupils, championship players and amateurs.

Top Results

Without any shadow of doubt, top results have a strong influence on the whole field of bridge its image and its promotion. Top competitive bridge always requires full support and must take first place in the investment of Federation resources. Nations with top results must not miss the golden opportunity of exploiting these to the full. In this period, when news items are scarce and performance scoops are hard to come by, success constitutes a privileged means of obtain publicity otherwise unattainable.

Bridge History and Culture

It is not possible to think of a development in bridge globally without making known its history and that of its great players and their image.

Bridge teachers should not limit themselves to simply teaching the techniques of the game, but they should transmit the sense of its rules, its ethics and therefore they should explain its history, evolution and its great players.

In all universal sports, the ever increasing diffusion and attention they attract are lined especially to the great facts, teams, players,

champions. The presence of an Usain Bolt in athletics, a Michael Jordan in basketball, of a Pele in football, of a Valentino Rossi in Moto GP or of a Ralph Shumaker in Formula One can greatly increase the attention, participation and interest in each sport. Statistics show that throughout the whole world, the names of the great sporting champions are better known than those of politicians, statesmen, Nobel Prize winners etc. Today the glamour of the Blue Team and the Dallas Aces outlives their legend, even outside the bridge world.

National Organisation Network

The national bridge system must be integrated and decentralised. The Federation's network must be structured with regional Committees, Provincial committees and local fiduciaries. These constitute the institutional reference point of bridge throughout the territory. The National territorial structure can count upon local organisation reference points overall.

(b) The National Bridge System and how it Operates

The system has a valid functional basis and all innovations introduced are in line with this. Data regarding the growth and development of bridge, top results, structural efficiency and organisational capacity all demonstrate the vitality and functionality of the system. We are harvesting the fruits of a season which has given a strong impetus to the structural organisational and technical development of bridge thanks to the combined commitment of the Federations, Regional Committees and Sports Associations in the work of extending bridge activities and qualifying operators.

However, in the light of results achieved, solutions must be continuously identified to give ever greater impetus to the constant commitment of the bridge movement, with due consideration to the economic crisis which has weighed heavily on our sphere too and above all, because of the drastic reduction in public and private funds. Not forgetting that September Eleven and the following dramatic consequences that we are still living, everywhere in the world, changed completely the fine fabric of our society, of its solidarity. It is essential that every project aimed at relaunching or developing bridge should give priority to safeguarding and strengthening the components and the characteristics of the system: sports associations and self-management.

Bridge Clubs

The Clubs make up the original foundations of the system. They must represent of school of education, life, democracy, an opportunity to experience club membership and to measure oneself in relation to others. Behind the Clubs is the vital voluntary work of the organisers who, out of true passion, make their irreplaceable

contribution daily, in spite of the many obstacles, both legal and otherwise, which at times make their work difficult and force them to operate under conditions of stress and fatigue. The voluntary workers make up an extremely valuable patrimony for a social, cultural, ethical and economic point of view. Without them, Bridge would never have achieved the consistency and the high standard that distinguishes it.

Self Management and Autonomy

The system is also based on democratic participation, constituted by the Clubs who elect their territorial representatives and therefore those in the most important positions in the Federation. It is, therefore, a well-experimented direct democratic system which furthers self management in bridge activities without external influence or interference, in accordance with the fundamental principles of the sports ordinance laid down by the International Olympic Committee. Autonomy in sport and therefore in bridge is a principle which is constantly and generally recognised by legislation. This signifies respect for the Associations' freedom and, above all, respect for the Associations' work. In our case, it means the running and the management of the whole phenomenon.

This autonomy allowed bridge and its organisations to remain free from political distortions or conditioning. Thanks to its autonomy, bridge is able to ensure linear and strict management, this keeping the sector free from the general malaise our public structures have suffered, particularly in recent times.

c) Problem Areas

The promotion of bridge and sport in general and the efficiency of the organisation structures are sources of satisfaction for those who have the development of their favourite discipline at heart. However, all this cannot be accepted as an excuse for neglecting the problem areas in the context of bridge and other sports. These problems require urgent action and solutions especially in consideration of the growing importance of sport, in general and bridge in particular in our society. In relation to the Institutions, bridge, like all sports, confirms its total commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities. At the same time it is held back by the obstacles that persist in hindering really widespread development of bridge and the organisation of activities that can guarantee high technical and competitive standards. I do not want to go into the subject of school politics on this occasion, although bridge in schools is giving us satisfaction beyond all expectations in spite of all the problems involved. This has come about thanks to the favourable initial impact legitimised by the highest state authority. However the difficulties encountered by clubs are becoming more and more onerous, particularly because some of the regulations are unclear

and their applications does not always take into consideration the actual conditions under which the clubs operate, nor the relevance or social benefits to the community. I refer to taxation and fiscal procedures which weigh heavily on the sports organisations and sports clubs in particular.

Having discussed the role of bridge and its present situation let us now consider

Objectives and Proposals for Bridge in the 21st Century

The objectives and proposals should concern four well defined fields of action: promotion of bridge playing for all citizens; reinforcement and modernisation of the organisation; improvement to the structures where activities take place; collaboration between the bridge organisation and public institutions.

Let us examine these fields of action

Promotion of Bridge

The first goal is to encourage as many people as possible to take bridge. There are four avenues to be explored: Bridge and the state schools; amateur and recreational bridge; bridge and the disabled; bridge and the marginalized.

Bridge and the State Schools

The Schools constitute the most important sphere from which new life can be given to the bridge movement. They must become the source of oxygen required to continue and guarantee the Federation's survival and continuity.

Amateur and Recreational Bridge

We are well aware of the vast number of people who know something about bridge and those who play "at home". This confirms the existence of a well established habit. However this habit takes on different specific personal aspects from individual to individual. Nowadays there are numerous ways of meeting individual needs and in the future more will be required to satisfy the various inclinations. Numbers themselves mean that there will be many more people involved at an amateur or recreational level than those who can or have the will to train for competitions. This premise means that we have to make a clear distinction between the various ways of playing bridge in order to give a better qualification to the different services for different needs. The collective structure of the clubs although it must be considered the most important, does not meet the requirement in this area. All the other kinds of organisation, which can give their support to bridge activities particularly with a certain continuity but also on an

irregular basis, will be assessed, set up and supported and the specific habits of each social group will be taken into careful consideration. The different age groups also require analysis. For young people, a general educational experience is important with the various roles this involves, associating with other people and integration, keeping up a sports activity with its organisation implications, a progressive adjustment to different methods instead of giving up hopelessly ... For adults it is essential to underline how bridge may be adapted to suit individual, family or group life styles as well as making them aware of the complementary role of the game and the social importance of voluntary workers. For the elderly, the aim should be to improve the quality of life by means of active participation and group initiatives. Society is generally ageing. We face some impressive numbers. Committing oneself to them, by offering the best in organisation and structures to enable them to participate in a recreational and amateur activity, is also a social duty. Finally, we should not underestimate the possible positive consequential effects in terms of employment, offering a service and the creation of new jobs in the sector of instruction, direction and organisation are closely connected.

Bridge and the Disabled

Bridge for the disabled is a matter of considerable humane, moral and social importance. Bridge, unlike all other sports activities, enjoys the unquestionable privilege of being completely free of the numerous problems linked to architectural barriers.

Indeed disabled people can play bridge under exactly the same conditions as the other competitors and on an equal basis without psychological conditioning.

Bridge and the Marginalized

I cannot give enough importance to bridge as a preventative measure. Today this is proving to be even more significant in the face of the widespread hardship that large numbers of young people are experiencing. It is necessary to turn our attention to the aid that bridge can offer to all those who find themselves in particularly difficult social situations for whatever reason. Experiences in many parts of the world bear witness to the fact that bridge, with its educational impact and ethical values, plays an extremely valid role in furthering socialisation and in recovery.

Reinforcement and Modernisation of the Organisation

The bridge organisation has to readjust its capacity, commitment and operative instruments to new needs and problems and take part in the changes. It is, therefore, necessary to reinforce the existing structures on the one hand and identify new ones on the other, in order to satisfy the growing demand now changed and

more complex, that requires the bridge organisation to amplify its field and adopt more modern methods.

Bridge has many facets but there are two main streams: competitive and recreational bridge. These two streams have distinctive features and they should be considered separately. They are, however, united on the common ground of values, principles and criteria which interact in relation to a series of political, organisation and technical aspects and problems which have to be faced together. For this reason, we should ensure that each stream is offered specific activities, but at the same time the unity of the bridge organisation as a whole must be safeguarded. These problems must be solved from specific quarters which can be identified within the Federation itself, in the Bridge Clubs, in collaboration with the central, regional and local administrative Institutions.

The Federation

It is necessary to reinforce the central and territorial operations of the Federation; to give greater importance to its government of the bridge network and to further better co-ordination between the many peripheral arteries of the bridge movement; to work towards the development of all the energy to be found within the bridge movement in order to give more effective support to those with talent and the development of programmes designed to achieve success in the competitive field; to introduce improved regulations to cater for decentralisation and to review management systems in order to give proper space to the regions participating in the Federation's central government and at the same time give the federal presidency greater power in choosing its collaborators and wider responsibilities. In the face of all this, it is necessary to ensure constant assessment of federal decisions; a more elastic government that is more open to territorial issues and better assisted by collective appraisals. Bridge promotion requires the commitment to setting up a bridge activity to integrate more efficiently with the objective of making this activity well planned and performed according to homogeneous and unitary criteria in order to guarantee methodology and functionality, but at the same time taking into account a whole variety of characteristic typologies and situations which must be respected.

To form this framework, particular energy and resources must be invested in the future to cope with the more exacting requests that come, on the one hand, from the demand for bridge in a new society undergoing continuous transformation and increasingly compelling goals imposed by national and international competitions on the other.

Communication through the mass media has made an important contribution to the success of bridge and its expansion over the last few years. However, it must not only continue to act as support for this new process of development but must also be reinforced and renewed in relation to this better articulated and more complex situation with its diverse problems and ever greater need to improve its image. All this obviously leads to a different relationship with the media and the development of an articulated project to reinforce the initiatives under way and to take bridge outside the strict circle of enthusiasts to reach a greater public including those who, wronging in our opinion, consider themselves to be untouched by the fascination of bridge.

The Federation will have to decentralise many of its functions and activities progressively and make use of its peripheral organs, the Regional Committees which, from a purely representative role will have to become autonomous in taking initiatives, organising activities, providing technical and cultural services and co-ordinating territorial interventions. This policy of transferring competence and functions, entrusted to voluntary management staff, will allow the territorial structures to acquire an ever greater political representation and at the same time give them the possibility to become autonomous in setting objectives and organisation. It is essential not to deviate from the primary objective of reinforcing and enriching the territorial structures which will have to take part in outlining the Federation's aims and programmes with regard to the interpretation and execution of territorial policies within their own areas. The objective is to make the territorial structures not only decentralised services, but protagonists and interpreters of the Federation's policies in two directions, firstly towards the territory by performing its functions and duties on behalf of the Federation both inside and outside the bridge organisation and secondly towards the central structure of the Federation by contributing to its territorial policies and programmes. Experience in Europe bears witness to an extremely important factor in reinforcing the Federation's territorial representation and this is the formation of a National Council, made up of members of the Federation's Executive Committee and those in charge of the peripheral organs. The Council will meet periodically with the Federation's peripheral and central representatives to examine the thematic principles of the bridge organisation's policies and management.

The Clubs

The Clubs play a fundamental role, not only in the strict circle of bridge playing but throughout the country, in bridge and purely social gatherings, as it is one of the most significant and qualified expressions of voluntary association involvement. The present situation shows that they are forced to cope with a thousand

difficulties due to the lack of basic conditions suitable for bridge and adequate support, as well as the obstacles created by inadequate and inappropriate legislation. For example it is essential, and here we are relying on the really pressing action that the IOC is conducting, to obtain a way which will allow the clubs to operate serenely and confidently within their own jurisdiction. A specific fiscal regime and new contractual profiles must be provided to allow them to take advantage of due facilitations in the running of their institutional activities and to avail themselves of collaborators according to their individual needs and possibilities, thus removing the whole incomprehensible, paralysing web of red tape, taxes and obligations. It is necessary and indispensable to give support and assistance through a specific structure to solve the problems involved in management, administration, bookkeeping and tax levy. It is necessary to find the best way of guaranteeing the support of local authorities with regard to distribution of services. It is necessary, as well as opportune, to design regulations for sponsorship to guarantee survival of the associations independently from the great sponsorships which are at present somewhat evanescent but have an important role to play in the project.

The Bridge Clubs must receive help from the bridge organisation to qualify the commitment of voluntary management operators and technicians in order to bring them in line with the job they perform in bridge activities and society in general. Important instruments towards achieving this objective, apart from the above mentioned training, assistance and counselling, appear to be the integration and development of informative and documentary communications to ensure constant updating of ideas, knowledge and competency.

Collaboration with the Regions and Local Authorities

Understanding and collaboration between the bridge organisation, the Regions and Local Authorities constitute one of the vital conditions in the process of development of bridge throughout the territory. This understanding has to transform itself into concrete initiatives with regard to legislation, promotion, execution and management of services designed to give support to the sports activities and associations, to be advanced together with common objectives and complementary functions.

The obvious and important advantages the clubs derive directly should not be underestimated or, worse, ignored in furthering institutional objectives.

Structural Improvement

Premises have always been a major issue for the clubs. This is the crucial problem which has to be overcome if there is any hope of

carrying out all our plans for a real, concrete and substantial autonomy without any outside conditioning or interference.

It is indispensable to realise that a club, in order to perform its institutional activities and achieve its goals must, first and foremost, be in possession of suitable premises, self contained and free from interference or intrusion. It must also be free from the conditioning that is the inevitable consequence of forced communions within structures destined to completely different activities.

Collaboration between the Bridge Organisation and the Public Institutions

The concepts dictated by sport in general have to be transferred to the bridge organisation in particular and the bridge sector has to find its place in the framework of this collaboration, using all the necessary channels and connections available.

In some countries, for example, the Schools project which the Federations have furthered with great perseverance, is typical of this kind of collaboration and its effects.

Dear friends, I think it is my duty before closing, to draw some brief conclusions. The will to overcome the crisis, which is troubling our society and to take on a new direction, that corresponds better to the general public's expectations, will find strong and indisputable support in the sphere of bridge, as in that of sport generally.

Indeed, it is at times like this that sport takes on an even more important role in society and its responsibilities increase with regard to the promotion of a widespread improvement in the quality of life of its citizens. As a bridge organisation, we are part of the world of sport and we must and want to make our contribution actively, convinced as we are, that we can take a modest but meaningful place in this vast and multiform mosaic.

It is this certainty which leads the bridge world, within its own organisation and in relationship to the institutions and public opinion, to reflect on the best ways to proceed in order to adapt bridge to the requirements of sport and society.

In order to achieve the objectives, a substantial and renewed commitment is required of the Bridge Associations and the public institutions. In fact, they share the responsibility for creating the necessary conditions for bridge to become accessible to everyone.

The objective is to consolidate the bridge system adapting the organisation to the needs of an evolving society. For its strategic features, the objective can obviously be pursued with gradual

interventions sector by sector. I am convinced that the bridge organisation will be able to achieve these objectives with the united participation of all, well aware of the dignity, albeit within modest structures, that the role of bridge may play in society.

“Bridge for peace” is the World Bridge Federation’s motto. Let us make it ours, let us feel that it is ours and, united as one, striving all together, let us be proud of it.

Thank you for your attention