



WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION

WBF Congress
Sanya, China, 16th October 2014

President's Report

Mr. President Emeritus, José Damiani, Members of the WBF Honour Committee, Colleagues of the WBF Board, NBO Presidents and Delegates, distinguished Guests, dear Friends, good morning and welcome to the meeting of the WBF Congress.

First of all, I would like to present the apologies of our President of Congress, Mr. Zheng Peiyan, for his absence today due to prior commitments which have kept him in China. However, he has sent us a message which I will be pleased to forward to you.

I take the occasion to thank once again the CCBA President, Mr. Xiang Huaicheng, and all our Chinese friends for their hospitality and the marvelous hosting here in Sanya.

Before starting our work, I have sadly to remind you that the WBF has suffered great losses with the passing of Jaime Ortiz-Patiño, former President and President Emeritus for many years, Joan Gerard, Jean-Louis Derivery and Jens Auken who had all been members of the Executive Council for many years and were some of the most dedicated, loyal and hard workers in the bridge world.

All of them, who were with us in Lille during our last Congress, were great friends, eminent and unforgettable personalities in their social life and not only in the bridge world, extraordinary people who worked with enthusiasm, dedication and passion for the development and affirmation of our discipline and whose memory, will accompany us and all their bridge friends everywhere in the world for the rest of our lives.

To these friends and all the others who sadly passed away, we pay tribute with gratitude and fondness.

We are in the 4th year of the WBF legislature which will end on 31st December and I am very glad to report that almost all our aims for this period have been realized. I have to thank the members of the Board, who worked with dedication and enthusiasm as a true team, the very efficient and professional employees, consultants and cooperators, the marvelous staff of our championships who enabled us to achieve our goals.

I am pleased to report point by point on what has been done:

1. Headquarters in Lausanne & WBF Organization

The main purpose at the beginning of my presidency, unanimously shared by the Executive Council, was to create a permanent administrative structure for the World Bridge Federation in Lausanne, close to the Headquarters of the International Olympic Committee, SportAccord, ARISF, FISU and several International Sport Federations and to maintain and reinforce the official recognition and fiscal status from the Swiss authorities (Canton de Vaud – City of Lausanne). Today these goals, as a result of working very hard with Marc De Pauw and our Swiss Lawyer Maitre Nicolas Gillard, have been achieved. The WBF has its Headquarters at la Maison de Sport International in Lausanne, sharing it with the European Bridge League. The WBF has two employees in Lausanne, Carol von Linstow, employed part time (since 1st December 2011), who provides administrative and secretarial services and Fotis Skoularikis, employed full time (since 1st January 2013), who provides the management of the website and IT services. Both of them provide their services to the European Bridge League as well and the related costs are shared by the WBF and EBL. The WBF has in addition a Presidential Office in Milano, with an employee, Marina Madia, who provides the secretarial services to the presidency. From a legal point of view, after a very long and complex procedure, the WBF has finally been registered, at the Registre du Commerce of Lausanne, obtaining its official status required by the Swiss Laws. The next step will be to create a complete centralized and more professional organization, in order to further reinforce the structure and to improve the operational workings of the WBF. This means to eliminate the structure and costs of the presidential office and reduce as far as possible the external supports to concentrate all the resources, human, technical and technological, in the Headquarters of Lausanne. We will start the project next year, to be able to have the process completely ended and perfectly operative during the legislature and before its end.

2. Legal status, Constitution and Statutes, notarization

The legal status is now clear: The World Bridge Federation, founded on August 18, 1958 in Oslo, recognised by the International Olympic Committee – IOC – as an

International Sport Federation, is a non-profit making organisation of a strictly civil nature, incorporated in the Swiss Laws and registered in the Commercial Register in accordance with art. 60 ff. of the Swiss Civil Code. The WBF is a recognised member of SportAccord – Association of International Sport Federations –, ARISF - Association of Recognised IOC International Sports Federations –, FISU - Federation International du Sport Universitaire – and IMSA – International Mind Sports Association –. One of the topic issues concerns the notarization of our Constitution and the introduction of a modern Statutes and its Rule of Enforcement, not only in conformity with the Olympic Charter and the IOC Principles, but definitively respecting the fundamental principles of democracy, transparency and division of the powers. We are working with our lawyer Maitre Gillard and I hope to be able to present a text to be submitted to the approval of the Congress and contextual notarization.

3. Information & Communication

A second and no less important purpose was to restructure and renovate our system of communication and information. The renovation of the Website and the employment of the webmaster in Lausanne was the first step. A Technological Commission, chaired by Alvin Levy, took care of the matter and starting from January 2013 we have our new Website, managed in Lausanne by Fotis Skoularikis. Concerning communications, Anna Gudge has been in charge since the same date. We decided to introduce a new element at the Championships, presenting daily films, interviews and a synthesis of the day. In addition added a Photo-Stream and published written interviews from the players and various personalities. This initiative enriched our communication system and was very well received. We have an active Facebook and Youtube presence, currently followed by nearly 2,000 who see the information posted there on a regular basis. I have for you a CD concerning the last Youth Championship in Istanbul so that anyone who could not follow directly from the Web can see what it is and understand the importance and, let me say, the value of the initiative. This service will be implemented for the future.

4. WADA & Antidoping

As you know the Antidoping policy is very important also in our discipline and our players are subject to the WADA controls both in competition and out of competition. Thanks to the excellent job done by Jens Auken the WBF agreed with WADA to have the OC Tests the day before the start of a championship, so we avoid a lot of complications and problems and, what is also very important, a great deal of additional cost. In our championship we have 4 OC and 6 IC controls. I want to remind you of the importance of TUE exemption being requested well in advance for the players who have to take any prohibited medication. The policy is very strict and has to be followed

as requested to avoid incurring unpleasant consequences which can result in heavy disciplinary sanctions. Much useful information, including the protocol to follow, can easily be found in our Website. Considering the importance of this matter and according to the IOC Principles we instituted since the beginning of the Legislature the WBF Medical & Prevention Commission, composed of eminent Doctors expert of the matter, already operating in this field and with good relations with WADA and Anti-doping World. Thanks to the work of the Commission starting from 1st January 2013, Beta-blockers have been cancelled from the list of prohibited substances in mind sports. This is also very good news because for reasons related to their health many players are using this type of medication.

We believe and have been used to saying that in bridge doping does not exist, but this is not the truth. Our Medical Commission in Lille 2012, in Bali 2013, in Istanbul in 2014 undertook a survey with selected players from the participating countries and the data obtained was subsequently analyzed. The first report on this work was presented to the E.C. in Bali and provided extremely interesting results particularly with regard to the attitude of bridge players towards medical substances connected with mental agility. The Commission had forwarded to the IOC, as requested, a report of its work, that you have in your folder and which will be published on Specialized Magazines and in brief will realize a booklet which will be a sort of guideline for the health of the bridge players.

To realise the importance of this matter and the attention that WADA pays and will pay in the future looking at the mind sports, please check the article in your folder which confirms that “ 'brain doping' is common in amateur sport”. Not forgetting that “doping” is not only outlawed by the Sport Laws but also by the Criminal Law in the majority of the Countries around the world.

For this reason, in addition to the introduction of a correct health education policy, our Medical Commission worked in close contact with WADA, SportAccord and the IOC to discuss the new WADA Code which will be in effect from 1st January 2015 and to prepare the text of the new WBF Anti-doping Rules which will be approved here in Sanya Executive Council.

5. Disciplinary Organs & Appeals Committees Cancellation

At the beginning of the legislature we provided to reduce the function of the Appeals Committee instituting the Disciplinary Commission and the Disciplinary Tribunal, giving them the competence on every ethic and disciplinary matter. Then I presented, a

proposal to eliminate the Appeals Committee in the WBF Championships to the Executive Council in Lille, August 2012. The E.C. gave a mandate to John Wignall to study the matter and to report at the next meeting. At the meeting in Lille, August 2013, we heard the report by Wignall and an additional report by David Harris on the experience of the EBL in Ostend, as a result of which the Executive Council decided to eliminate the Appeals Committee and to introduce the Reviewer.

The Panel of leading players and the Reviewer are appointed by the President before the start of the Championship. The WBF Rules & Regulations Committee will amend the General Conditions of Contest to leave all the decisions to the Tournament Directors and to codify the role of the Reviewer, maintaining where compatible the WBF Code of Practice. The Congress has to ratify the amendments in the By-Laws.

6. New category in Youth

Following the report from Ata Aydin, Chairman of the Youth Committee and Alvin Levy, On Site Organizer, concerning the Youth World Championship held in Atlanta, August 2013, where almost 50% of the participants were born after 2000, the Executive Council in Bali unanimously approved the addition of a new age category, the Kids, reserved for players up to 15 of age. In Istanbul last August the 1st World Kids Championship by invitation was held. Being the first experience we invited the Kids Teams offering free full board accommodation and free entry-fees, organizing in addition for them a free outing. The event (shorter than the others - just one week) was, let me say, a triumph and the breath of fresh air and the enthusiasm brought by the kids "infected" the entire environment.

7. Youth Bridge Development

This is our challenge and I want to thank the Youth Committee, chaired by Ata Aydin, for the excellent job they are doing. I take the occasion to thank Geert Magerman for his enthusiastic and dedicated job in the University field, reminding you and myself too that our thanks, congratulations, appreciation and encouragement are absolutely not enough, he needs our complete support and help if good results are to be achieved. I am pleased to remind you that in Belek, on the occasion of the SportAccord Convention we signed a Protocol with FISU, which will be very helpful in developing university bridge.

I am proud that many NBOs everywhere in the world take care of the Youth, but we have still a lot of work to do. We need to be convinced and strongly believe that this is the only way to guarantee a serene future for our beloved discipline. I am proud to report that the bridge world looks with sympathy at the youth. To support the organization of the Atlanta Championship, last year, with the help of Chris and Donna

Compton, two marvelous supporters of the youth bridge, we collected more than 50.000 dollars from private donations, thus being able to offer for free to all the participants the meals and the participation at several social and cultural events.

As decided by the Youth Committee, having the resources from the sponsorship (and we have express our deep gratitude to Sevinç Atay who collected some 80.000 dollars), for the Championship in Istanbul, in addition to the kids we subsidized also some juniors, youngsters and girls teams from Federations not able to face the entire cost, so giving them the chance to participate the event.

To help the youth, offering them some facilities participating to the WBF events, we created some simultaneous tournaments, whose income goes to a specific Youth Fund for the youth activities. As you can well understand the passion, the enthusiasm and the dedication are not by themselves enough. I hope that all the Federations will understand the sense of the initiative and will publicize these events stimulating their clubs and their players to participate.

We are also organizing some teaching bridge seminars, starting next year. In the last meeting of the E.C. Council in Bali it was decided to study the possibility of creating a Youth Bridge Foundation on the basis of a Charity Foundation, in which the donations can be tax-deductible. It's not an easy task and our lawyers are studying the matter.

8. The World Championships Cycle is:

Odd Years:

- World Bridge Teams Championship (Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup, d'Orsi Trophy) & World Transnational Open Teams
- World Youth Open Bridge Championship

Even IOC Summer Olympic Games Year:

- World Bridge Games (National Open, Women's, Senior Teams and Pairs)
- World Youth Bridge Teams Championship

Even IOC Winter Olympic Games Year:

- World Series (Transnational Open, Women's, Senior, Mixed Teams and Pairs)
- World Youth Teams Championship (Juniors, Youngsters, Kids & Girls)

9. Format of the Championships

The format of the championships has been changed for the following events:

World Bridge Games:

As you know up to 2004 in Maastricht the name of the event was “Bridge Teams Olympiad”, then it became World Bridge Games and for the editions of 2008 (Beijing) and 2012 (Lille) was incorporated in the World Mind Sports Games under the umbrella of IMSA. Following some changes in the IMSA organization and policy from 2016 the WBF will once again organize its own event. The format changes. Being confirmed the Open, Women and Senior National Teams, the Open, Women and Seniors National Pairs are added and are an integral part of the event and not just an additional competition like the previous Mixed Transnational Teams Championship, which has been cancelled and moved to the World Bridge Series. It means that the Pairs event will have the same dignity and importance of the Teams event with medals and titles (and of course master-points) of the same value will be awarded.

What is the reason for this decision? The World Games are the WBF Main Championship, allowing all the affiliated Federations to participate with their national representatives and without any pre-qualifying Zonal Championship. It was for this reason that when the event was born in 1960 it was named “Bridge Olympiad”. We have to recognise the importance of this competition and we have to demonstrate our different specialties, teams and pairs, like the other disciplines show the various specialties of their own sport. In addition it will, we believe, provide an additional stimulus for the Federations to participate and be officially represented at least by one pair. Consider that at the present time we have two World Championships for National Teams, but not one for National Pairs. By introducing this event we can reinforce our organization and our image by involving the Federations and so recognize the importance of their role and also giving them the opportunity to receive a subsidy from their NOCs or Authorities, which is not available in the case of transnational events. Finally let me conclude that, putting myself in a player’s shoes, I would be very proud to have the chance to represent my Country in the World National Pairs Championship, especially if I do not have the opportunity of being a member of my National Team.

World Bridge Series:

The new format of the event, starting here in Sanya, provides for the division of the Championship into two different phases: 1st week Mixed events (teams and pairs), 2nd week Open, Women and Senior events (teams and pairs), linking the teams and pairs so that a player can decide to stay just one week or for the whole period. As was the case for previous editions all the included events will be transnational. The format is familiar to the European players, being successfully experienced in the European

Open Championship since 2003. The Mixed week has to provide exciting and challenging competitions for both teams and pairs in order to be able to attract and stimulate the participation. We should remember that until now the Mixed events have been organized (and are considered) just as a filling.

10. Requirements for participation in Bermuda Bowl & Venice Cup

The Executive Council approved a new procedure for the qualification of teams in either the Bermuda Bowl “BB” or the Venice Cup “VC”. Up to the Bali Championship, for an NBO to be allowed to participate, if qualified, its team had to participate the World Bridge Games in the respective category, or if that was not the case, then the NBO could regain eligibility by having at least two pairs play in the World Open Pairs or at least one team play in the Rosenblum Teams for the BB and at least two pairs play in the World Women’s Pairs or at least one team play in the McConnell Teams for the VC. The new procedure, effective immediately, reduces the number of pairs necessary from two pairs to one pair. Effective in 2016, an NBO that has not played in the corresponding event in the previous World Bridge Games may regain eligibility to play in the next two BBs or VCs by having one pair play in the World Bridge Games’ new pairs’ events at the World Bridge Games in the appropriate category.

11. New Victory Points Scale

A new Victory Points Scale has been introduced and was first used in December 2012, in Beijing, on the occasion of the SAWMG, coming into force and being adopted for all WBF Championships starting from Taicang. It has been totally agreed by the high level athletes and very well received by the players. The new scale is not of course the “word of God”, but is mathematically perfect, expressing as it does the result of the matches and as above mentioned is appreciated by the players. Some complaints from some commentators say that it is difficult to understand for non-bridge players but in reality, any new scale being adopted seems strange at first, especially to non-bridge players but, as happened for the previous methods used they will learn. As agreed by the Executive Council in Bali a worldwide survey among the players was carried out and the large majority approved of it. The results of the survey have already been published on the WBF website. It should be noted that the adoption of this scale is not mandatory but just recommended for national or club competitions.

12. Scheduling of the WBF Events

Another main issue concerned the scheduling in advance of the WBF Championships for the entire legislature so that our Zonal Conferences and NBOs are aware of the WBF Calendar in order to avoid the risk of overlapping and also not to interfere and

clash with the International organizations. We have been able to achieve this goal and I am very pleased to report the program:

2015:

- World Youth Open Bridge Championship, Opatija, Croatia, 20 to 29 August
- World Teams Championships, Chennai, India, 26th September to 10th October

2016:

- World Youth Teams Championship, Salsomaggiore Italy, 3 to 13 August
- World Bridge Games, Wroclaw, Poland 3 to 17 September

2017:

- World Youth Open Bridge Championship, Lyon, France, 16 to 25 August
- World Teams Championship, Lyon, France 12 to 27 August

2018:

- World Youth Teams Championship, Shanghai, China 1 to 11 August
- World Bridge Series, Orlando, USA, 22 September to 6 October

13. International Bodies

As you know the WBF is recognized by the IOC as an International Sport Federation and is an affiliated member of ARISF (Association of the Recognized International Sport Federations) which includes all the Federations recognized by the IOC not included in the Olympic Games, SportAccord (previous GAISF - General Association of the International Sport Federations) which includes all the International Sport Federations both recognized and not recognized by the IOC, FISU (Federation Internationale de Sports Universitaire), IMSA (International Mind Sports Association) which includes the Mind Sports recognized by SportAccord: Bridge, Chess, Draughts, Go and Xiang Qi . As you all know the IOC has elected its new President Mr. Thomas Bach, succeeding Mr. Jacques Rogge. In St Petersburg, May 2013 the General Assemblies of all these Association have been held and 3 new Presidents were elected. In ARISF Mr. Raffaele Chiulli, President of the International Motor Boat Association and in SportAccord Mr. Marius Vizer, President of the International Judo Association. Concerning IMSA, José Damiani, who founded the Association, decided to leave the Presidency after two terms in office and Mr. Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, President of FIDE, was elected. José Damiani was elected Founder President, Marc De Pauw as Treasurer and I am a Member of the Board. In 2008 and 2012, respectively in Beijing and Lille, IMSA organized the World Mind Sports Games and our World Bridge Games (previous World Teams Olympiad) were incorporated. As I have already reported, IMSA has decided not to continue with this kind of event and seems to want smaller

events aimed at a limited number of top contestants. So we will organize directly our World Games.

SportAccord organizes the SAWMG, which started in 2011. SA's new President Marius Vizer's top priority is to initiate an all sports event in 2017. The format will be a multi-city event, spread out on the calendar in two parts: winter 2017 and summer 2018, or early spring 2017 and autumn 2017. The event would include all SA member federations. The feasibility study is currently under way, along with financial planning to ensure that the event would be profitable. The SAWMG would be affiliated with the summer or winter portion of the event and would probably skip one year to accommodate the larger event. The programme of Mr. Vizer is to give the same dignity to all the recognized sports, balancing the gap that exists today between the largest and the smaller ones.

For Bridge and the Mind Sports, this is a very exciting innovation. I am pleased to say that the relations with all these International Bodies are excellent and I had the opportunity to meet their Presidents in several occasions. In particular I am pleased to remark our very good relations with the IOC President who, as you know, published a very kind Welcome Message on the Sanya Official Programme.

14. SportAccord World Mind Games

This event started in 2011 and is an invitation event reserved to 4 open and 4 women teams, a total of 48 players who play, in addition to the teams, a pairs and an individual event. SportAccord pays the travel, hotel accommodation and food for all the participants. There is prize money of \$250,000 (140.000 for men and 110.000 for women) and SportAccord grants \$50,000 to each of the International Federations involved to cover their organizational expenses. In the 2013 edition we had much higher press coverage than in previous years: apart from the impressive daily TV coverage, via satellite, each day news reports were sent out to >3,000 news agencies worldwide. The criteria for the invitations are: the host country, one team from Europe (European Championship), one from USA and one (depending on the year) from the World Teams Championship or the World Bridge Games.

15. New Regulations

We introduced the WBF Disciplinary Code, the WBF Tournament Directors Official Register and the related Policy, the new Eligibility Code, the Dress Code and the New Anti-doping Code. Since the starting of the legislature we have adopted a new Policy for the meetings and the related Reimbursement Policy: with the generous support of the EBL and ACBL we could and have organized three meetings a year: Executive Council, as traditionally, during the main World Championship, the Officers in Spring

and the Management Committee in summer or autumn, depending on the date of the E.C. meeting.

16. Institutional activity

During the past four years I have visited all the Zones and several NBOs, attending their championships and events. Everywhere I enjoyed my stay being gratified by marvelous welcome and generous hospitality. I had the occasion to meet old and new friends and many of them are here today in this room. Of course I found several differences among the various countries, but everywhere and every time I met the same passion and enthusiasm and I was impressed by the dedication and professionalism showed in administration, promotion, development and management. And I was very happy discovering everywhere a great interest in youth.

Conclusion

I believe that we have to be satisfied at having achieved all the aims determined at the start of the legislature, despite the very difficult and dramatic historical period in which we are living and which of course influences our activity.

From a fiscal point of view (the Treasurer will show you the data) we may also be satisfied because the results shown reflect the good work undertaken in the administration and management following the simple but secure principle that the ancients defined as “Bonus Pater Familias”: cautious exploitation of the resources and strict control of the expenses.

All this has been possible thanks all my colleagues of the Executive Council, the members of the Committees, the extraordinary members of the Staff of our championship, and our marvelous employees and cooperators: what makes me proud is that we acted and worked all together as a real team and not as a group of individuals.

I want to thank my colleagues of the E.C for their confidence in giving to me the great honour and privilege of serving the WBF for a second term as President.

But I want to thank all of you, the representatives of the NBOs and of the Zonal Conferences, and express my gratitude not only for your remarkable work in your own countries, but for your confidence and for helping, supporting and stimulating me and

my colleagues in friendship, always showing your co-operational spirit to achieve the common goal.

I am at the end and I hope not to have bored you with my long report, but I wanted to give you as complete a picture as possible of the situation and I remain at your complete disposal for any question or clarification.

Thank you for your attention.

Gianarrigo Rona