



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING
Chennai, 28th September– 2nd October 2015

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Friends,

Also this year I have to start my report honouring the memory of great friends of us who sadly and in some cases suddenly passed away.

As if you are already aware of the passing of Ernesto d'Orsi and Jean-Claude Beineix and I have already reported at the meetings both of the Officers in New Orleans and of the Management Committee in Lucignano. It seems to me due today remember them that in the last meeting of the Executive Committee, held in Sanya, were seated with us at this table. Looking at the picture of the Honour Committee members taken in Sanya, it is still very difficult to me to accept that they are no more with us.

Consent to me to officially repeat in this report at the Executive Council that Jean-Claude and Ernesto were two pillars of the WBF organisation. Ernesto was one of the most eminent personalities in the history of bridge over the last forty years: an essential point of reference, who represented, with his advice and his suggestions, a sort of "permanent school" for everybody. Jean-Claude was an authoritative member of the Executive Council for ten years up to 2003, but since then has continued to serve the WBF with competence, passion and dedication at the Championships and also as Chairman for the delicate sector of the organisation of the Tournament Directors. Ernesto and Jean-Claude were great friends of us all and their memory will accompany us and all their bridge friends everywhere in the world for the rest of our lives.

Unfortunately other Friends passed away and for all of them I want, on this occasion, remember Gary Hayden, five times World Champion in Seniors, who sadly passed away just few days before being awarded the medal and the trophy for the victory in Bali; Jeff Johnston, who was a pillar of strength for

the ACBL organisation and who always helped and supported us in organising our events in US; Fulvio Colizzi for more than twenty year responsible of the Main Office and of organising and setting the equipment both in the WBF and EBL championships.

To them and to all the other Friends who sadly passed away, we pay tribute with gratitude and fondness and I ask you to honour their memory with a moment of respectful silence.

Now, before starting my report, I am very pleased to congratulate Chen Zelan, Patrick Choy, Georgia Heth and Mazhar Jafri on their re-election to the Executive Council and to inform you of the election of the new members - I congratulate and welcome Josef Harsanyi and Howard Weinstein, the newly elected members of Zone 1 and Zone 2, Marcelo Caracci from Zone 3, together with Janice Seamon-Molson, the newly elected HLPs, to the WBF Executive Council. I am also very pleased to congratulate Esther Sophonpanich for her re-election as President of Asia Pacific Bridge Federation and Ashok Goel for his election as President of Bridge Federation of Asia and Middle East.

As I have already reported to the Officers Meeting in New Orleans, starting from the beginning of January, Simon Fellus assumed his function of Secretary, operating full time in Lausanne. At the same time, Carol left the Lausanne Office, while she will continue to be part of our family, joining us in the various meetings in her position of Secretary to the Council. Marc will report later about the organisation of the office. I am pleased to officially express to Carol our deep gratitude and our thanks for her outstanding services to the WBF and to welcome Simon in our family.

Turning now to our work, I am pleased to report on the activity carried out since our meeting in Sanya, last October.

On 31st of October I was in Salsomaggiore Terme to sign, with the Mayor of the Town and with the Italian Bridge Federation President Gianni Medugno, the contract for the organisation of the 2016 World Youth Teams Championships. On this occasion I attended the Press Conference organised by the Mayor to present the event. You have in your folder all the documents related to this event

From 3rd to 5th November I was in Lausanne to attend the annual International Federations Forum organised by SportAccord. From Lausanne I went directly to Opatija for the Closing Ceremony of the FISU World Bridge Championship,

Yves Aubry having attended the Opening Ceremony on our behalf. On this occasion I met the Croatian Federation President Jurica Caric, the Opatija Bridge Association Goran Grguric and we signed the agreement for the organisation of the 2015 World Youth Open Championship.

The 12th of November in Milano I attended with Yves the Press Conference organised at the City Hall by the Ministry of Sport of the City of Milano to present the European Champions Cup. The Press Conference was also attended by the CONI Vice President and the FIGB President. The Championship was played over the next few days at the FIGB Headquarters. I have to congratulate Yves and the EBL for the new success achieved by this event, which is one of the most important display-windows for the image of the European bridge.

From 27th to 30th November I was in Providence where I met the new elected President of the ACBL Suzy Subeck, the new elected WBF E.C. Member Howie Weinstein and of course Al, Merlin and Paul, while Georgia, who was elected to the WBF Executive Council for her third term, had already returned home for previous commitments.

The 3rd and 4th of December I was in Lausanne with Marc for the entrustment of Simon Fellus and his introduction, with the help of Carol and Fotis, to the various services and activities undertaken in the Headquarters.

From 10th to 17th December I was in Beijing with Marc, Patrick and David to attend the 4th SportAccord Mind Sport Games, which appears later on the Agenda for further discussion. In Beijing we attended the meetings of IMSA, also attended by José Damiani and in addition we had various meetings with the representatives of Ourgame with whom we defined and signed a very beneficial quadrennial contract to organize a Worldwide Bridge Contest. These items will be considered later. I had the opportunity and the privilege to meet, together with José, Zelan and Patrick, Mr. Guo Jinlong, member of the Politburo and previous Mayor of Beijing and to play bridge with him.

From Beijing I flew directly to Roma, where on 19th December with Cippi we attended, as guests of honour, the Mass for the Athletes, annually organised by the Italian Olympic Committee, but this year, in occasion of the Centenaire of CONI, it was held in St Peter's Church, with the intervention of Pope Francesco who, at the end of the Mass, spoke to us with his great humanity and unbelievable simplicity, despite his enormous charisma. It was an extraordinary, exciting and unique experience that will remain indelibly in my mind and in my heart. Being in Roma, the day after, the 20th, I had the

opportunity to meet Giovanni Capelli and Paolo Gabriele to summarize the activity of the Medical Commission and to discuss the programmes for the next year.

The 2nd of January with Cippi I attended the Funeral of Jean-Claude Beineix in Pont l'Eveque. Yves also, with Claude and Bernard Pascal with Catherine, attended the Ceremony. The WBF provided a wreath. It was a very touching ceremony attended by such a great number of friends who really filled up the Church, including the President of the French Federation, Patrick Grenthe. José gave the funeral oration.

The 27th of January I was in Wroclaw with Marc and Maurizio Di Sacco to visit the venue and to attend the Press Conference (organised by the Mayor of Wroclaw, Mr. Rafał Dutkiewicz, and Radek, in his position as President of the Polish Bridge Union) to present the 2016 World Bridge Games. We will talk later about the event, but for now I am pleased to congratulate and thank Radek and his Vice President Igor Chalupec for the excellent job done, which bodes extremely well for the success of the forthcoming championship.

The 30th and 31st of January I was in Moscow with Marc and José, invited and completely hosted by President Kirshan Ilyumzhinow, to attend the Meeting of IMSA, about which Marc will report later.

From 5th to 7th February I was in the Headquarters in Lausanne for my periodical visit and to accomplish various activities; in particular I had

- A meeting with Anna, Simon, Fotis and Mark Newton, examining and discussing in detail the various problems with the organisation of the communication and the updating of information. I believe that we did a good job and I have to thank all of them for their dedication, competence and willingness;
- A meeting with Mrs. Sabrina Tramparulo, the responsible of la Maison du Sport International, to define the situation concerning the rental of the office after IMSA leaves;
- A meeting, together with Marc and David, with our Swiss lawyer Nicolas Gillard with regard to the civil action promoted by Elinescu & Wladow against both the German Bridge Federation and the WBF. About this even more disappointing point David will report later in detail. I want only to say that is very sad and disappointing that because of two

rogues, caught red-handed, and properly sanctioned by our Justice, we have to face such a costly and unpleasant judicial development.

Since the EBL Presidential Council was also held Lausanne at this time, I had the opportunity to meet our European colleagues and to talk with them. With Yves and Marc, *inter alia*, we spoke about a new duplication device presented by a Danish Company and about a new online system of teaching bridge, already presented us at the Congress in Sanya. Yves will report later about both the items.

In Roma on 10th February I attended the meeting of the National Council of the Italian Olympic Committee and then, being a member, together with the other Italian Presidents of International Federation, of the Committee of International Affairs, I attended a meeting regarding the candidature of Roma to host the 2024 Olympic Games. In this occasion I had the opportunity to meet the ARISF President Raffaele Chiulli and to talk with him about a possible candidature of myself as member of the ARISF's Board.

The 13 – 15th February I was in Destelbergen to check with Marc and Dirk De Clercq the accounts and the draft of the 2014 balance-sheet. Marc will report on this in depth later, but for the moment I want to thank him and his assistant Dirk for the excellent work done and the even more than positive result achieved.

On 23rd and 24th of February a WBF Delegation, composed of myself, Marc, Simon, Fotis and Marina, went to Chennai to meet the BFI, LOC and Hotel representatives and technicians to discuss and agree the final details of the organisation of the championship: the work is in progress and it seems that everything is going well to ensure the success of the event. On this occasion we attended the Press Conference for the official presentation of the event, its logo and its official website.

The 7th of March I was in Monaco, invited by Raffaele Chiulli to attend the annual Powerboat Federation Gala Ceremony. Several personalities from the world of sport attended the event, including Marius Vizer, President of SportAccord.

From 13th to 15th of March in New Orleans we had in New Orleans, kindly hosted by the ACBL, the Officers Meeting and you have in your folder the minutes. I want once again express our gratitude to the ACBL and personally

to Suzy Subieck and Robert Hartman for their generous support and very warm and friendly welcome and hospitality.

The 26th and 27th of March I was in Lausanne to attend the meeting Medical & Prevention Committee and I took the occasion to meet Anna and Simon to talk about various commitments.

From April 18th to 25th I was in Sochi, Russia together with Marc De Pauw, David Harris and Simon Fellus to attend the SportAccord Convention, that was attended also by José Damiani. During the Convention, in addition to the General Assemblies of both SportAccord and ARISF, the IMSA Board Meeting, several work-shops and meetings among the International Federations, the IOC and the other International Bodies, representatives of Media, Sponsors and Companies & Cities interested to the promotion and development of Sport have been held. The IOC President Thomas Bach, the ANOC (Association of the National Olympic Committees) President Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Jaber Al Sabah, the Sport Legend Lord Sebastian Coe and several other top Officers of the World of Sport attended the event. During the SportAccord General Assembly, I have been appointed as Chairman of the SportAccord Mind Sports Commission. The Convention was closed by an impressive Awards Ceremony, celebrating the Sport's Heroes. About all these events we have specific points in Agenda.

From April 30th to May 3rd I was in Lucignano on the occasion of the EBL Presidential Council and during a session of the meeting, kindly invited by Yves, I reported about the activity and programmes of the WBF.

From May 8th to 13th with Simon I was in Buenos Aires, kindly invited and hosted by Silvia Boldt, President of the Argentina Bridge Federation and Chairman of Organizing Committee, to attend the General Meeting of the Confederacion Sudamericana de Bridge and the Opening Ceremony of the LXV CSB Championship.

From Buenos Aires the 14th of May we flow to Barbados, kindly invited and hosted by Roglyn Hinds, President of the Barbados Bridge League, to attend the Opening Ceremony of the CACBF Championship and the Ceremony of the Barbados Jubilee. We also attended, by invitation from Sheena Rayner, the CAC General Meeting. We left Barbados the 18th coming back home the 19th of May.

From 26th to 30th of May, again with Simon, I was in Amman, kindly invited and hosted by the Jordan Federation, to attend the Opening Ceremony of the BFAME Championship and the General Meeting.

On Tuesday 2nd June I was in Todi, Umbria, to meet together with the ARISF President, Raffaele Chiulli, the Mayor of the town, who is very interested to host a top bridge world event.

From 4th to 7th June in Lucignano, kindly hosted by our great friend and EBL Board Member Filippo Palma, we had the Management Committee Meeting. You have in your folder the minutes, which will be examined later. I take the occasion for thanking once again our host for his very kind and generous hospitality at Villa Fabbriche in the marvellous land of Tuscany, where we had a profitable meeting and enjoyed our stay and his hospitality.

The 12th of June with Marc De Pauw I was in Amsterdam where in the morning we met the representatives of Pro Sport discussing about their project and in the afternoon, together with Armand Trippaers, we met the Dutch Bridge Federation President, Koos Vrieze, discussing about a possible candidacy from Netherlands to organize the 2019 World Championships.

On Tuesday 16th June with Marc I was in Paris to meet at the French Federation Headquarters the President Patrick Grenthe, the Director Eric Remy and the On Site Organizer Jean-Philippe Daublain to discuss the details of the organisation and to sign the Agreement for Lyon 2017. Our President Emeritus José Damiani attended the meeting.

Unfortunately due to a discomfort, which created to me a problem of vertigo (fortunately now everything is ok), I was obliged to cancel my travel to Lausanne on 23rd June to attend the Ceremony of the Centenaire of the IOC, where I was represented by Simon who had the opportunity to personally met President Bach and to talk with him, informing him about our activities and being assured that President Bach will forward to us a Welcome Message to publish on the Chennai Official Programme.

For the same reason I could not attend the European Open Championships and the EBL Board Meeting in Tromsø, being kindly invited by Yves and I want to thank, once again, him for his understanding.

On 23rd and 24th of July I was in Opatija where I had the honour to be awarded by the Mayor, Ivo Duijmic, with the Opatija Honorary Citizenship. It was an unexpected prize and honour that I want of course to share with the entire bridge family. World Bridge Federation.

From 9th to 13th August I was in Chicago, in occasion of the Summer ACBL Championships. I attended a meeting with Georgia, Howie and Nader Hanna

about the North America Zone and the USBF Board meeting, being kindly invited by Howie. I have also the occasion to meet Al to talk about our matters and Suzy Subeck and Robert Hartman. On the night of Sunday the 9th, in the ACBL Presidential Suite, together with Al I awarded with the WBF Gold Medal and the Replicas the USA Team winning the d'Orsi Seniors Trophy in Bali.

From 18th to 30th August I was in Opatija for the World Youth Open Championship, which reached a great success, achieving the record of participation. During the Championship I attended the Youth Committee Meeting. Opatija is a marvellous place and an ideal venue for the bridge competitions, very appreciated by the players and the guests. We will discuss later about this point, but since now I want to express our thanks to the City of Opatija and its Mayor Ivo Duijmic, the Croatian Bridge Federation and its President Jurica Caric, the Opatija Bridge Association and its President Goran Grguric, who was also the On Site Organizer of the event, and least but not last to Branka Grguric, the real “deus of machina” of the organisation. I want to express also my gratitude to the CCBA and in particular to Zelan, who very successfully promoted in China the Opatija event which resulted in having more the one hundred Chinese youth participating.

On September 9th I was in Lausanne with David Harris to meet our Swiss Lawyer Ross Wenzel to finalize the amendments to the Disciplinary Code, to focalize the situation concerning the status of the German Case and to discuss the needed changes to the Statutes and By- Laws.

The day after, the 10th, I flow to China, being invited with the Presidents of the other Mind Sport Federations to attend the Chinese National Mind Sport Games in Zao Zhuang. José Damiani attended the event in his position of IMSA Founder President. The Ministry of Sport and the Chinese Olympic Committee President, together with several Central and Local Authorities attended this prestigious event, opened by an impressive Ceremony. We stayed in Zao Zhuang up to the 13th and had the opportunity to meet of course Chen Zelan, who was one of the main organizers, and several friends, including the CCBA President Xiang Huaicheng, the Vice President Fan Guangsheng and the General Secretary Wang Xiaofeng.

From China José and I flow to Paris and went by train to Lyon, where in the afternoon of the 14th we had a meeting with Patrick Grenthe and the other French Officers involved in the organisation of Lyon 2017 and then in the morning of the 15th we attended the official very successful Press Conference of presentation of the event.

The 22nd of September I flew to Chennai and finally we are here together.

As you can well imagine the above mentioned activity and its preparation and organisation, together with the daily activity of the office, implied an hard work involving our personnel and co-operators and I want to express to Simon, Marina, Fotis and Anna my deepest gratitude for their competence, dedication and professionalism and for their patience in supporting me.

As you well know, at this time the world of bridge is in turmoil following accusations of cheating on several bridge-related websites, with many people making interesting points and participating in the debates.

We will later discuss in depth about the very unpleasant situation concerning cheating in bridge and I am sure that we will be able to adopt all the necessary tools to face and eliminate this problem.

I provided few days the following statement and I hope that you will share my considerations: *“The WBF is aware of this and is following the occurrences very attentively, taking whatever action is necessary, which is part of its duty and its competence. The WBF is an International Sport Federation recognized by the International Olympic Committee and as a result adopts, respects and applies the IOC Principles, Laws and Rules. It is a Federation of National Bridge Federations and not of individuals and has jurisdiction and disciplinary power over individuals only relating to matters occurring in events organised by itself and consequently under its jurisdiction. We fully understand that players throughout the world are naturally very concerned, which the WBF appreciates and acknowledges, but they must recognise that the rules and correct procedures must be respected and everybody protected before launching any public accusations, without concern for its own Bodies. The NBOs and the Zonal Organisations are the ones to take the initial action if the facts involved are coming from national or zonal events. The WBF may however look at any “dossier” and exercise its rights through the Credentials Committee to invite or not invite individuals to participate in the World Championships. The WBF intends to take any suitable action on the recent cases following the rules established and involving everybody concerned, primarily the accused players, those making the accusations and competent witnesses. It is the duty (not only the right) of every player to report anything that contravenes the ethics of the game that we all should respect. Zero tolerance is and has to be our target, but any accused person has the right to a fair trial and to a fair verdict. This is the indisputable principle should govern our lives”.*

Thank you for your attention.
Gianarrigo Rona