



"Bridge for Peace"

Executive Council Meeting

9th – 11th March 2017

Philadelphia, USA

Agenda Point 3 President Report

Dear Friends

Good morning and welcome to Philadelphia.

Opening the meeting and starting the works I had already the pleasure to welcome our President Emeritus, José Damiani and to welcome the ACBL President, Jay Whipple III and the ACBL CEO, Bahar Gidwani, thanking them for the generosity in hosting this Meeting.

First of all, I believe that you all want to join me in expressing our warm congratulations to Georgia Heth and Howie Weinstein on their re-election as member of the WBF Executive Council. I am in addition very please to inform you, also if many of you are already aware of it and that the ACBL appointed its new President in the person of Mr. Jay Whipple III. I met him in San Diego and I forwarded to him a letter of congratulations on behalf of the WBF.

The activity done in the last six months after our meeting in Lyon was very intense, seamless, concerning the institutional commitments, the international relations, the organisation of the championships and the other participated events, the preparation and the launch of the online tournaments, the preparation and realisation of several initiatives concerning the Youth Bridge development.

For all these reasons and to discuss and plan the activity of the next six months, I decided to call here in Philadelphia this Executive Council Meeting instead of the traditional Management Committee.

About the various items we have specific points in Agenda with reports and presentations, so we will examine in depth, debate and take the appropriate decisions later.

Having such an Agenda and so many delicate points to discuss, I shall just summarize the activity carried out since Lyon on to leave time for the debate.

After Lyon, in the middle of September, I was In Comandatuba, Bahia, Brazil, kindly invited and more than generously hosted by Marcelo Caracci and Rafael Amoedo, President of

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the Brazilian Federation, to attend the Brazilian Championship and to visit the venue of the 2018 South American Championship. It was an occasion to meet many friends talking with them about the WBF activity, the topics, the development and prospects. I am pleased to thank Marcelo and Rafael and to congratulate both of them, wishing them to achieve the deserved success, rewarding all the efforts that they did and are doing, also if I was informed by Marcelo that there are some problems that I hope will be overcome.

From 21st to 24th of September, I was in China, before in Beijing for the Opening of the WBF/Ourgame World Wide Bridge Contest and then in Sanya, to visit the venue for the 2019 World Bridge Teams Championships. In Agenda there are the specific points with the reports by Al, Marc and me.

From 14th to 17th October I was again in Beijing, together with Patrick, kindly invited by the CCBA to attend the Opening Ceremony of the Hua Yuan Women Elite Cup. I met Chen Zelan talking with her about various items and in particular about the venue in Sanya for the 2019 World Bridge Teams Championship. With Zelan and Patrick, before the Opening Ceremony, we participate in an Invitational VIP Tournament where we met Madame Chen Zi Li, former State Councillor, Minister of Education and a Vice Chairperson of the National People's Congress, who later opened the event. We had also a meeting with Frank NG and James Guan of Ourgame, discussing about the World Wide Bridge Contest and the Online Robot Tournaments. I had also the opportunity to meet the new partner of Ourgame, Mr. Jin Zhanjie.

From 8th to 10th November I was in Lausanne for the International Federations annual Forum. The 10th in the morning I met Anna Gudge, Mark Newton, Simon and Fotis, speaking with them about the communication and website and with Mark about the Online Robot tournament. Later I met Marek Malysa and Samantha Punch, in Lausanne for the meeting of the Bridge & Science Committee, talking with them about their programs and plans.

From 22nd to 27th November I was with Simon in San Diego, where we met Al, Georgia, Howie, Merlin and Paul. Merlin introduced to me the ACBL President elect Jay Wipple III. In particular with Al we discussed about the Orlando organisation and the On line Robot Tournament; with Georgia about the constitution of Zone 2, juridical and disciplinary matters and the WBF Statutes and By-Laws; with Howie about disciplinary and security. I had a dinner and a long very positive meeting with Bahar Gidwani, talking with him about the common matters that we share with the ACBL, the Orlando Championship and the constitution of Zone 2. With Al we met Marcin Waslowicz to watch the set of the new technological security system by him provided and its possible adoption by the WBF since Orlando. With Al we met also Brent Manley for the publication on the Bulletin of an article promoting Orlando and we spoke about the Orlando Bulletin. We met Lindsey talking about the organisation of side and charity tournaments in Orlando. I met Philippe Cronier and Giorgio Duboin talking about the format of Orlando and the HLPC. Finally we attended the USBF meeting, where, inter alia, I was very pleased to hear warm congratulations to the WBF for the organisation of the World Championship in Lyon and for the organisation of the World Wide Bridge Contest and its Final in Beijing. To many of these points we will come back later, being in Agenda specific reports.

From 3rd to 16th December I was again in China. Taking the occasion of the IMSA Elite Games in Huai'an, we linked, without any supplemental cost being all the people involved

member of the IMSA Games Staff and being Shanghai the airport of reference, a visit with Marina to Shanghai to the Xuhui ShengXing Youth Bridge Club, kindly invited and hosted by M.me Kong Xiao Chen, founder and chairman of the Club, who is well known by all of you and who made at our meeting in Lyon an impressive presentation of the Club activity. The Club takes care of teaching of bridge in 13 different primary and middle schools (public and private) in Shanghai and last year started with the High Schools. ShengXing attended the last three World Youth Open Championship in Atlanta 2013, Opatija 2015 and in Lyon 2017 with such an impressive number of more than 100 young players, achieving several medals. On the 3rd and 4th of December we met pupils and teachers together with M.me Kong, the schools directors and the representatives of ShengXing. I congratulated M.me Kong for the impressive organisation and the tremendous job that ShengXing did and is doing in developing youth bridge, projected towards the future.

From Shanghai, on the 5th, we went by car with Lilian to Suzhou/Wujiang where we met M. Di Sacco, S. Fellus, M. Eminent, F. Skoularikis, D. Ballas and A. Aydin to visit, also in this occasion kindly hosted by the CCBA and the LOC, the venue of the 2018 Youth World Championship. We visit the venue and discussed with the representatives of the LOC the details of the organisation. We will come back later to the matter. From Wujiang on the 7th always by car with Lilian we went to Huai'an for the IMSA Elite Games. About this event, of course we will discuss later.

On January 17th I met in the office in Milano Maurizio Di Sacco to discuss about the format and the Supplemental Conditions for Orlando.

The 22nd in Lausanne with David, Georgia and Marc we met Ross Wenzel and Nicolas Zbinden, our Swiss Lawyers, to discuss the Statutes and By Laws and other items concerning our organisation in Lausanne. We will discuss later in depth the matter. The 26th and 27th in Destelbergen to examine with Marc and Dirk Declercq the 2017 accounts.

From 5th to 13th February I was in PyeongChang to attend the 132nd IOC Session, the Opening Ceremony of the Winter Games. I will report later about PyeongChang, but since now I can say that it was a very positive experience and I had the occasion to meet several friends from the IOC, GAISF and IFs. In particular Patrick Bauman, GAISF President, confirmed to me that he hopes to organise the GAISF World Mind Games, while with Sheik Al Sabah, President of OCA and ANOC, we spoke about the forthcoming Asian Games (thanks to him bridge was admitted at the Games) and about the situation of Kuwait: being the Kuwait National Olympic Committee suspended by the IOC, the Kuwait Bridge Federation cannot attend international events. Sheik Al Sabah confirmed once again his friendship and his complete support to bridge.

On 14th of February I flew from Seoul to Gold Coast where I attended the Closing of the Commonwealth Nations and the Opening of the Gold Coast Congress. I was kindly invited by John to attend the assembly of Zone 7, where Ben Thompson was elected both as WBF Executive Council Member and Zonal President, starting from next 1st November and I knew that Bruce Neill will leave for family reasons the presidency of the Australian Bridge Federation at the end of April and Mrs. Allison Stralow is the incoming President: John will report about these items that I included Agenda under "Unfinished Business" at point 28.1 not being known in advance. In Gold Coast I talked with Bruce about the organisation of the 2021 World Teams Championship, but in this moment he was not able to give a final answer and we need to attend the ABF meeting of April, where Bruce will report about the

matter and when the new President will take the chair. I spoke about this point with Ben Thompson, who of course at this moment cannot say anything but in general seems not to be negative. I met Mr. John-Paul Langbroek, member of the Queensland Parliament for Surfer Paradise who was very positive and promised his full support in case of assignment of the event to Gold Coast and asked me to keep him informed about the progress of the works. In Gold Coast I met also Esther Sophonpanich speaking with her about the Asian Games and the WBF Seminar. I had also the occasion to speak with Paul Hackett about a possible agreement with the WBF for the organisation of the Commonwealth Nations. Charles Page, the organiser of the Commonwealth Nations organised for me three different interviews with journalists, including the editor of the ABF Magazine. Inter alia I had the occasion to meet and talk with many friends from Australia and New Zealand.

Let me repeat once again that we are doing a marvellous job - continuously implemented with new projects and initiatives - with the youth and in particular with the kids, having been able to convince our NBOs to take care of its development and to start to teach bridge in the schools. Simon will report later about this item, but I can say, after the appointment of Gilad Ofir as Coordinator of the Youth Development (with the support of Simon) and the launch of the Youth Mini-Site, managed by Fernando Lema and Ana Roth (with the support of Gilad, Micke and Simon): "laying in a new course, full impulse, excellent results coming". Just to keep you update about the products under the WBF training brand, you can find in your folder three posters. And if you check the Mini-site you can see an unbelievable weekly updating of news, info, lectures, lessons, reports of events, interactive tools, pictures, videos.

Concerning the development, I am proud to remark that, thanks to the dedicated great job performed by Mazhar, who will report later, just few weeks ago, Saudi Arabia officially recognised bridge as sport, under the umbrella of the Olympic Committee, lifting a taboo which seemed to be insurmountable and opening a huge window of opportunity to the development of our beloved discipline. Saudi Arabia will participate the WBF and BFAME/APBF events and of course the Asian Games in Indonesia. This recognition successfully ends what José started with Mazhar years ago, never gave up and that also I tried to keep alive in my relations with of Sheik Al Sabah. I believe that the admission of bridge at the Asian Games has had an important role and was determinant. Thanks to the admission to the Asian Games we registered also a new request of affiliation from the Vietnam Federation, who has been recognised by its NOC.

In the last six months we launched:

- In August in Lyon, the new system, via tablet, of control and coordination of the data and images of the matches, provided by Traian Chira, that also offers additional services to the players and TDs; Traian completed the second step of his job and in Orlando we will experience, in the broadcasted matches, the replacing of both bidding boxes and bridgemates with the tablets; you can well imagine which will be the importance of this system also with regards to the security;
- in September the Youth Minisite, as above reported;
- in November/December, the 1st WBF TDs Seminar in Zone 6, carried out by Ton Kooijman, Maurizio Di Sacco, Laurie Kelso and Peter Eidt, under the coordination of Josef Harsanyi;
- at the beginning of the year the Online Robot Tournament and the Online Championship for Youth Teams.

About these events Al, Josef and Simon will report later.

In addition to the new initiatives as well as the ones in progress and to all the other aspects of our administrative activity, including the relations with our stakeholders inside and outside our family, we took care of all the issues concerning the organisation & management of the events of the last three months of 2017, the preparation & organisation of the 2018 events & championships and the planning of the future events. Anna, Fotis, Marina and Simon, in strict alphabetical order, and in addition Mark Newton and Maurizio have been under pressure. I was in strict contact by e-mail with Al, Howie, Giorgio, Maurizio and Philippe to define the Conditions of Contest for Orlando, in particular with Al also via Skype for the organisation of Orlando; with Al, Mark, David and Marc for the Online Robot Tournaments; with David and Georgia for the Statutes and By-Laws and with David for all the disciplinary matters, with Marc for the administrative matters and the budgets of the various events, daily with Simon for the communications, the external relations and all the secretarial and administrative issues.

We are also organising the moving of the storage-house that becomes inadequate considering our equipment and in addition we are organising a new system of packaging that will ensure the preservation of the equipment and will make easier the handling and shipping: Marina, in addition to the ordinary daily activity, together with Gianluca Barrese is following the project, as well as she is following the logistic concerning Wujiang and Orlando. Anna, in addition to the other commitments, made a great job filling the Wada Questionnaire and providing the validation of our testing data and I assure you that it wasn't the easiest of tasks to perform. Simon is involved in every aspect of the communications, secretariat activity, youth matters, relations with the IOC, GAISF, ARISF and with the Companies that periodically and constantly contact the Secretariat and our Office, in addition he attended the various Seminars periodically organised in Lausanne for the Federations by the MSI. To Anna, Fotis, Gianluca, Marina, Mark, Maurizio and Simon as well as to all the members of the marvellous staff of our championships I want officially to present our thanks and gratitude for their dedication and for the excellent work done, that always consented us to be up to the task.

I think that we can archive the year 2017 as a very positive year under the point of view of the organisation and the management of our activity and the excellent results achieved in the economic field. I don't want to anticipate the Treasurer Report, but since now I want to remark that this result is even more satisfying considering the investments done and the costs incurred in development and organisation. I want to underline that the policy of strict control of the expenses combined with the better use of the internal and external resources was, once again as our tradition, the key of the result. It is a tribute to the careful programming of the Executive Council and its application made by the Treasurer whom I wish to congratulate on his excellent work.

Unfortunately, in total conflict to the above good results and rather unexpected, we have to register the very bad news we received from the area of justice that throw our world out of balance and made us very upset and I am referring to the German Case and to the Fantoni/Nunes Case and their implication. We will debate the matter later, but since now I want to make a few comments.

First of all I want to thank and congratulate our President Emeritus for the excellent Editorial that he forwarded to John Carruthers to be published on the IBPA Bulletin,

answering to the Carruthers Editorials and indirectly to some text posted on the social networks, perfectly clarifying the sense of our belonging to the IOC and the Olympic family.

At this regard, I want just to remark that, after the great effort made in the last 25 years to show the dignity of sport of bridge that deserves to have been accepted and welcome as part in full of the Olympic Movement,

- having obtained the confidence of the IOC and the other International Sport Organisations, ARISF, GAISF, IMSA;
- having had, thanks the recognition by the IOC, the opportunity to approach and successfully develop bridge-sport in Schools and bridge-sport for leisure;
- having achieved the great goal to be admitted at the Asian Games and having the concrete chance to be admitted to participate the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing;
- having the IOC recognised the E-Sports, giving us a further possible opportunity to be included in the Olympic programme;
- having been bridge, as above reported, officially recognised as sport, under the umbrella of the Olympic Committee, in Saudi Arabia,

and not only for these reasons, there being many others, whilst respecting freedom of expression from everyone, the idea to leave the IOC, is entirely incomprehensible and unthinkable, absolutely not acceptable and certainly impossible. What it's sure is that we don't want to go back to be just a card game, labelled as gambling. Not saying that for several of our affiliated Federations it should be a real catastrophe, as remarked by José and also by various delegates at the Congress in Wroclaw.

Concerning the CAS decision in the Fantoni/Nunes case that stirred up a wave of (right) indignation, sowing the (wrong) idea to get rid of "this trappings", I want just to take me back to the decision of the German Court in the Elinescu/Wladow case. To get rid of the CAS and to live the field completely open to the Courts doesn't not help, but can only put us in even more disadvantageous position. Not only the German Case represents a warning, because also in the past, before the recognition by the IOC and without the umbrella of the CAS, being completely subject to the ordinary law and Judges, had to face very heavy situations.

Of course we are and have to be very upset for the CAS decision that to us sounds inconceivable, but as President Bach (that I assure you was really upset as well as all the delegates at the IOC Session Meeting in PyeongChang for the CAS decision cancelling the suspension stated by the IOC of 25 Russian athletes) said that the CAS decision has to be respected but it's not enough, as José already reported, to guarantee an invitation to participate in the Olympic Games. In other words, also if the CAS policy is generally generous towards the athletes, above all if professional, this doesn't constitute a laissez-passer which grants privileges and immunities to its holder.

As for the Olympic Games, all our events are by invitation only and the Credential Committee is in charge to evaluate the eligibility of the players. In any case in the specific F/N are still suspended by the Italian Federation up to April 2019 and the decision is absolutely in effect. What happened in Spain and its consequences are matters for the disciplinary organs. What it's sure is that they are not allowed to attend official events, our events.

A part any other comment, that I leave to the debate, in my opinion there are two passages very important, clear and quite comfortable in the CAS decision, the first saying

that “*such conclusion does not mean that the players are innocent of any wrongdoing*”, the second that “*the present decision does not mean that the system of control provided by the EBL Rules is invalid or cannot be used again*”.

We are the administrative organ of the WBF and our duty is to provide and continuously update and improve rules and tools, constantly controlling their efficiency and suitability, to guarantee the security of the play and the comfort of the players: we did, are doing and just in this meeting we will examine new implementation both in the rules and in the tools.

Let me repeat in conclusion, hoping that you will share my conviction, that we achieved great results in our administration that cannot be frustrated by decisions coming from third parties that for sure are upsetting us and that we can't completely eliminate (also if we have to do our best to try) but having the tools to face them.

Thank you for your attention.