



“Bridge for Peace”

President’s Report to the WBF Congress Orlando, 2018

Mrs. Chen Zelan President of IMSA, Mr. José Damiani, WBF President Emeritus, dear Colleagues, dear Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman, dear Friends, good morning and welcome to Orlando for the celebration of the WBF Congress.

Before going more deeply into our matters, I would like to remember with you the Friends who have sadly passed away and were with us at the time of the last Congress in Wroclaw.

I particularly remember Anna Maria Torlontano, Member of the Committee of Honour of the WBF and Honorary Vice President of the European Bridge League. For decades Anna Maria was the soul of the women bridge, of its development and its affirmation everywhere in the world. Her enthusiasm, passion, dedication, dynamism professionalism and competence entrained everyone not only who had the privilege to work and cooperate with her but also who had just the occasion, the opportunity to meet her. Anna Maria was a great, unforgettable friend of all of us.

Unfortunately other Friends sadly passed away since Wroclaw, leaving us grieved. Extending to them a warming thought, for all of them I want, on this occasion, remember Jean-Paul Meyer, who suddenly left us few days ago.

Jean-Paul, who last year was in Lyon with us, coordinating and supervising the Daily Bulletin, the Vu-graph and the Internet Broadcasting, was a great eclectic personality, champion, administrator, officer, journalist: in two words Mister Bridge as José remembered him.

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.

Two years have passed since our Congress in Wroclaw and now here in Orlando we come to the end of this legislature and start the new. Here we are to summarize and evaluate the results achieved.

This year the Congress assumes great importance, not only because we are celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the foundation of the WBF, but above all because we are discussing and I hope approving the new Statutes and By-Laws that will give a more solid base at our organisation to guarantee its further development, consolidation and affirmation.

At the beginning of the legislature our objectives were to consolidate the organisational, juridical and economical structure of the Federation, to reinforce the relations with the Olympic Committee and the other international bodies, to increase and stabilize the interaction with the Zonal Conferences, to improve and update the standard of our championships, to improve and consolidate the development of bridge, with particular regard for youth bridge.

I think, and hope that you share my belief, that we have to be satisfied because we achieved all the aims determined at the start of the legislature, despite the very difficult and dramatic period in which we live and which of course influences our activity.

The structure and the legal status of the WBF are clearly defined with the incorporation in the Swiss Laws and the registration in the Commercial Register in accordance with art. 60 ff. of the Swiss Civil Code.

As reported at the Congress in Sanya the new step, unanimously shared by the assembly, was the introduction of a modern Statutes and its By-Laws and Rules 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. A Charter that could guarantee the future of the Federation accordingly also to the evolution of the civil life and social relations. We worked a lot, in synergy with our lawyers, and finally we defined a text to be submitted today to your approval.

I think that we can archive the legislature 2015/2018 as very positive from the point of view of the organisation, development, management of our activity and the excellent results achieved in the economic field. I don't want to

anticipate the Treasurer's Report, but for now I will just remark that this result is more consistent than expected and even more satisfying considering the investments made 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 internal and external resources (following the simple but secure principle that the ancient defined of the "Bonus Pater Familias": cautious exploitation of the resources and strict control of the expenses) was, once again as our tradition, the key to the result. It is a tribute to the careful programming of the Executive Council and its application made by the Treasurer I wish to congratulate on his excellent work.

Let me say once again that, as we all know, our aim is not to make money, to deliver dividends or to increase our fortune for another's benefit, but to invest and deliver our income both to the organisation and management of our institutional activity - including the adoption of professional competences in the field of communications - and to services to our affiliated members. At the same time we are and have to be aware that every project or programme can be realized step by step, brick by brick, only having the adequate resources and according to its sustainability.

Nevertheless our objective must also be to maintain sufficient capital to ensure financial stability and viability and provide for the administration of our activities at least for the following legislature.

Concerning the relations with the IOC and the International Bodies, I can say that we are living a magic moment.

Bridge has been admitted and very successfully participated, together with all the other sports, to the Asian Olympic Games in August in Jakarta. Michael Bambang Hartono, Ekawahyu Kasih and Esther Sophonpanich, greatly supported by the President of the Indonesian Olympic Committee, Rita Subowo and by the President of the Olympic Committee of Asia, Sheik Al Sabah, have done an outstanding job to achieve this great result. We owe a debt of gratitude to them as they helped us to open a big window that represents the first step to reach our dream to be part of the Olympic Games. Thank you dear Friends. Esther is today here with us and I proud to call her at the stage to be awarded with the WBF Gold Medal and to receive your applause.

I am pleased to report to you that our relations with the IOC and the other international bodies are even more consolidated. In particular our presence in

the IOC life is a concrete reality: I was invited to and attended the 132nd Session Meeting of the IOC in February in Korea, on the occasion of the Winter Olympic Games, and we will be invited to attend future such meetings.

We introduced Zonal Officers Seminars and have already organised the first two, in 2016 in Medellin, Colombia in cooperation with the Confederacion Sudamericana de Bridge and in 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa in cooperation with the African Bridge Federation. The third planned for 2018 in Pacific Asia has been moved to next year because the Asian Cup and the Asian Olympic Games did not leave space in the calendar for our event.

Let me repeat once again that we did and are doing a marvellous job - continuously implemented with new projects and initiatives - with the youth and in particular with the Under-16s, having been able to convince our NBOs to take care of its development and to start to teach bridge in the schools. We launched the Youth Mini-Site and the World Online Youth Championship with excellent results. We defined an agreement with the Swedish Bridge Federation to adopt their newly developed, exceptional teaching system to offer to all the affiliated NBOs. The Youth Committee and the Kids Sub-Committee, chaired by Ata Aydin and Sevinç Atay, gave the input to an impressive project, successfully realized and performed by Gilad Ofir, Simon Fellus, Micke Melander and Fernando Lema.

Less than one month ago in Wujiang we staged another exciting Youth World Championship, beating all the records with 77 qualified teams representing 29 NBOs and 7 WBF Zones. Apart from any other consideration, what is marvellous is that in the Kids (under 16) category 18 teams competed, representing 5 WBF Zones. This event with such a number of teams competing, adopting all the sophisticated tools at our disposal, as per the other WBF championships, has to be finally recognised as a main WBF event. I want to express my gratitude and congratulate the CCBA and the LOC for the excellent preparation and organisation of the event which assured its great success. I am very pleased that these records have been proudly achieved in Wujiang, since China is unquestionably the leading Country in developing youth bridge, achieving tremendous success.

Concerning the development, I am proud to remark that, thanks to the dedicated great job performed by Mazhar Jafri, 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. This recognition successfully ends what José started with Mazhar years ago and that also I tried to keep alive in my relations with Sheik Al Sabah. I believe that the admission of bridge at the Asian Games has had an important role and was the determining factor. Thanks to the admission to the Asian Games we have affiliated other new NBOs, Vietnam and Haiti and are working to affiliate Mongolia, all of them under the umbrella of their National Olympic Committees.

We restructured and renovated our system of communication and information. We provided the restyling and the renovation, also under the point of view of the functionality, of our Website. We improved in our events the activity of daily films, interviews and a synthesis of the day. In Chennai we launched the “Live News from the Championship” which has been very welcome and well received by our audience, enriching our communication system. We have improved our presence on the Social Networks. We have developed electronic and other tools to develop the image of bridge. We pay great attention to this aspect and we are continuously implementing this service.

Concerning our championship, we introduced in Wroclaw in the World Games, in addition to the Open, Women’s and Seniors, the Mixed Teams and Pairs and we have now introduced the Mixed Teams, in addition to the Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup and d’Orsi Trophy, in the World National Teams Championship, starting from the 2019 edition, as well as increasing the number of the qualified teams to 24 per category, maintaining unchanged the duration and the format of the event.

Unfortunately not everything in our garden was rosy. We had to face the terrible situation of cheating which exploded just before Chennai 2015. This was not directly connected to our events, but caused us and our bridge world great concern and turmoil and a lot of serious and practical problems.

We approved an implementation of the Disciplinary Code, the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Unethical Behaviour. We defined new rules concerning the competence and jurisdiction and the eligibility to participate in our events, including them in our Constitution and By-Laws.

We involved the HLPC, introducing a confidential express line to forward complaints and report unusual or unacceptable behaviour, giving them the authority to investigate the cases and to refer to the prosecutor their advice about a possible disciplinary action.

To guarantee security we introduced and continuously implement new electronic tools, managed by Traian Chira, which enable the registration and online broadcasting all the data and the images related to a match and in addition here in Orlando we started with a new system of surveillance, managed by Marcin Waslowicz, with cameras which allow us to maintain the control of the tables and the rooms and to intervene immediately in case of infractions. We are continuing to update the tools according to the new technologies.

I can say that the situation is largely improved and from Chennai on we have not had any further serious cases complained about or reported. Of course we must not let up in the efforts already under way, which have already begun to achieve such good result, the momentum must be maintained, implementing the use of even more sophisticated tools as such possibilities arise.

In the last months we had also to face the unpleasant and unexpected decisions of the German Court and the CAS with regards to the cases of the German Doctors and the Fantunes.

We cannot discuss or cancel the decisions, but once again I want to remark that all the bridge competitions are by invitation only (and the Credentials Committee is in charge to grant or refuse the invitation) and as the IOC President Thomas Bach said at the IOC Session Meeting in PyeongChan, an acquittal verdict is not in itself enough to guarantee the invitation: in other words this doesn't constitute a laissez-passer which grants privileges and immunities to its holder.

This is the message clear and simple that cannot be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Before closing my report, I want to take the occasion to officially say "thank you" to the colleagues that ended their term and left the board, Sevinç Atay, Yves Aubry, Josef Harsanyi and Radek Kielbasinski expressing to them on

behalf of the bridge family and personally the gratitude for their service to the WBF.

I should like to express my heartfelt thanks to all my colleagues of the Executive Council, the chairmen and the members of the Committees, the Consultants who cooperated with me in the quadriennium with friendship and dedication, with a big hug to Alvin Levy, Marc De Pauw, David Harris and Georgia Heth with whom I cooperate very closely. A special thanks to my mentor José Damiani, our President Emeritus, for his friendship, confidence and proximity with his always precious support, advice and stimulation.

To Anna, Carol, Dirk, Fotis, Gianluca, Gilad, Marina, Mark, Maurizio and Simon as well as to 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 allowed us to be up to the task. Anna, Marina, Maurizio and Simon have continuously been under pressure and believe me that it's not easy to report the amazing pile of work that they made: all of them in addition could not escape my lumbering presence.

I want to thank all of you, dear friends, 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.

Last but not least today we have the privilege to honour a great friend, a great gentleman, an amazing person who offered outstanding services to bridge in the 32 years that he devoted at the WBF and that decided to leave at the end of this legislature, the 1st Vice President John Wignall, to whom, on behalf of the entire bridge family, I am proud to award the WBF Gold Medal.

Closing my speech, 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 third term as President. I hope to be up to the task.

Thank you for your attention.