



## **WBF Executive Council Meeting Wuhan, 15<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

### **Agenda Point 2 President Report**

Dear José, dear Friends,

Good morning and welcome to the Executive Council Meeting.

I have already welcomed the new members of the board to whom I renovate my greetings and congratulations, but starting our works I want to express my gratitude to the Friends, who ended their term, for the service done as members of the E.C. Georgia Heth, Mazhar Jafri, John Wignall and Chen Zelan, who are still with us today in their position of members of the Honour Committee, and Paul Janicki, Sheena Rayner, Merlin Vilhauer and Howie Weinstein. They leave us an evidence of friendship, experience, knowledge and dedication, but I want to remark the outstanding service done by Mazhar Jafri and John Wignall in their respectively 40 and 35 years of belonging to the board and to underline the significant 10 years contribution of Georgia Heth. I am sure that all of you share my thoughts and join me in saying to them a big thank you.

At the beginning of the year we started the new legislature: we had the constitution of the North American Bridge Federation – NABF – (WBF Zone 2) and the elections of their own board and of the members of the WBF E.C. as in BFAME (Zone 4), CACBF (Zone 5), APBF (Zone 6), while SPBF (Zone 8) provided in 2018 with effect for its new WBF E.C. member from 2019. According to the new Statutes the process will end next year with the election by the

Congress of 3 members: at this point the composition of the Executive Council will be completed.

A meeting of the Management Committee has been already held in Lucignano in May, but today we have the first E.C. meeting of the legislature and in Agenda we have several very important items to examine and discuss.

For the benefit of the new members and for reminding to the old, including myself, I believe that is important to synthesize the organisation, activity, works, goals and let me say the “philosophy” of the WBF since the beginning of my presidency, shared by the boards of the two previous legislature, that still today represents my conviction and that I hope you will share with me for the current time and for the future.

The main goal is the definitive consolidation of the WBF, its structure and organization. It should be the realization of a solid and unshakeable basis which permits us to plan calmly without worrying unduly about the future.

To do this it is necessary, in my opinion, to reinforce and refresh, and in some cases to change, responsibilities and appointments, distributing the energies of the Council in a balanced way to avoid any overlap of responsibilities and to enable us to utilize the strengths and skills found within the membership.

The inspiring principle of good governance of a collective body is that the table is round and that all the members have the same right of speech and thought, respecting the deepest principles of democracy which not only require but impose a frank debate, without qualms, aimed at reaching the best solution. Here at this table we are all equals, with the same dignity, same importance and the same right to consideration. We all can be free to express our opinions and we must do so, freely talking through the ideas of others and not being afraid to disagree. If any member of the board has items to discuss, not listed in the Agenda provided by the President, has the right to request to the President to add them. This is, and must remain the playing area, corridors, chat, forum must be left to others.

The President is the coordinator, who always assumes personally the responsibility for the running of the Federation and who has the task of supplying the political and programmatic direction, providing the Agenda of the

meetings, proposing the assignment of roles, responsibilities and functions, in the spirit and sometimes with regret, which are then discussed and deliberated by the Council. The mechanism is very simple and linear even though extremely significant. The respect of this principle also serves to allow the members to get to know each other better and to form a team and this team can work, despite having small imperfections, which are immediately remedied. This principle guides my way of being President and it relates to a mental attitude, culture and education which form the basis of my character and which have guided me in all my activities, professional and otherwise.

The rules and procedure of good governance concerning democracy, transparency, information and publicity are provided by the new Statutes approved by the Congress in 2018 in Orlando, and the By-Laws approved by the E.C. and endorsed by the same Congress and the Codes, Laws, Rules & Regulations approved and the Statements deliberated by the E.C. The Management Committee in Lucignano in May, according to the rule of the publication of the minutes of the meetings by extract provided by the By-Laws, discussed the matter and approved to avoid the publication of sensible data and arguments that can be contrary to the protection of the privacy and that in any case might backfire. Examining this point in Agenda, we will come back to the matter to take a final decision.

We are a team: this is axiomatic and we have to be firmly convinced of it. I believe very strongly in team work. We are single members who together make up a complete team. All the team members must work towards the common goal and seek to work in unison to achieve our aims. "*E pluribus unum*" is a well known Latin expression that became the motto of the United States of America.

When we sit at this table (and we must remember always that this is our own choice, because nobody constrains us) we must forget our single or national community interests (of course without forgetting our roots and the reality of our territories) and must look after the interests and desires of the whole World Bridge Community without distinction.

Whilst accepting the autonomy that each of us will need to have within our own sector it is vital that we do not work in an enclosed environment with the

doors locked against other members of the committee and we must not jealously guard our individual ideas, but must share them with our colleagues. We must communicate together and above all, help each other always to achieve the best possible result for bridge.

When we are seated around this table we can also discuss any animosity and problems that we may have. We must bring out our ideas, not hide them, but we must be able to accept the final decision of the board. Not all decisions can be unanimous and surely some of them will be majority decisions, but outside the Council these decisions must be seen to be the decisions of the WBF, accepted by all the Members of the Council even by those who had a different view point. This is what constitutes the work of a team: to be able to accept the view point of the majority and to be able to sacrifice, without rancor, personal view points in respect to the views of the democratic vote.

Another point that must guide our decisions is the absolute respect for the rules that we give ourselves to follow and any new rules that we will formulate as time passes. We must remember that we are not politicians, we are administrators and so cannot, must not, make exceptions to our own rules for political reasons or for reasons of friendship. The rules must be equal for all, the same for everyone, and must be seen to apply everywhere. If there are wrong, inadequate or anachronistic rules, they must be changed but while they are in place they must be applied without exception, if no exception is dictated by the test itself. As Cicero said, "*legum servi sumus ut liberi esse possimus*" only being servants of the Law, we can be free.

I am confident that all of you are in agreement with me on these principles that must guide our activities and I am sure that if we follow them we will obtain enormous satisfaction in our work. I am convinced that we will be a great team and will achieve the best for bridge in the world.

In order to organize the work properly, the administration and the politics of the WBF belong to the Council. In the meantime the Management Committee will be called, according to the Statutes, to consider all the powers of the Executive Council, when the E.C. is not in session, except those requiring a

qualified majority. The Officers will be called on to plan and execute the statements of the Council.

The annual meeting of the Executive Council is held during one week of our annual main championship; the two annuals meetings of the Management Committee (three or four days) can be held in occasion of a top Zonal event or at the Headquarters in Lausanne or in other places where it is convenient.

Since the beginning of my presidency we covered all the costs of these meetings, releasing the Zones from those costs, before at their charge. For the Management Committee when hosted by the Zones they have to take care of the accommodation, while we cover the travel expenses. Since 2011 we had a gentlemen agreement with the ACBL and the EBL, generously hosting one meeting each.

The *ratio* is that being a team the WBF has to cover the costs, the Zones can give a support , saving relevant cost and it's an occasion for meet our affiliated and registered members.

An indispensable instrument of support for the Council are the Committees. The Committees do not have to be a simple statement of names in the book, which disappear in occasion of the meetings and do not give any contribution to the works. The Committees have to be a real and strong support to the Council in the matters assigned to them. They must represent an agile and capable work-tool, easy to coordinate and to make operative. For this reason they are formed of few persons, no more than seven people, including the chairman and the secretary, and according to criteria of competence, role, knowledge, experience and professionalism.

Since the beginning 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.

The new Statutes and By-Laws, in accordance with the principle of democracy, division of powers and transparency, assured a more solid base at our organisation to guarantee its further development, consolidation and affirmation.

We introduced Codes and Rules which not only dictate the fundamental principles but also the procedures and administrative functions of the whole apparatus.

The organizational structure of our championships is today a quite perfect machine, but if needed has to be consolidated and must be improved continuously, in particular paying attention to all the news in term of technology, which give us the opportunity to assure the security and to offer an even better service to the participants.

In term of development and support to the Zones, we introduced periodical Zonal Seminars for Officers and Courses for Teachers and Tournament Directors in addition to subsidies for their organisational activity. To support, improve and increase this activity we created the Development Fund, giving a percentage of our income to it and maintaining this support.

For TDs and teachers, we introduced professional set up, to train them in personal presentation skills, and of course, for the teachers their training includes specialist teaching methods.

For the Officers we updated techniques of organization and management of the Federations and clubs, seeking resources and marketing. Another purpose of the Seminar is to make aware the NBOs of what is the WBF, what is doing, how is managed and administrate and to make the NBOs more directly responsible for the participation of their national delegations at the Zonal and WBF championships and events, being informed about everything: the technical and organizational part, the management of the championship, the purely technical details and regulations.

During these meetings the WBF representatives (and I personally in these occasions and during my institutional visits) met officers and players, talk with them and everywhere we found friendship, esteem, consensus, closeness to our

institutions and feeling of belonging to our family. This is very encouraging, stimulating and motivating, because here there are people, volunteers, bridge lovers without any personal interest or angle, really devoted to the development and affirmation of our beloved discipline and its image, values and meanings. who deserve our gratitude and our support.

Starting my presidency, one of the main point of the program concerned information and communication. My thought was that Communication had to be timely and effective and the WBF web site had to work like a Swiss watch: the data had to be updated and the news published in real time both directly and by links with external sources.

We need to offer to our members a service as best as possible, to circulate our image and the image of sport of bridge in general. Communication is essential to make ourselves and our organization known, to explain who we are, what we have done, what we are doing and we want to achieve, to spread our discipline and its values, being proud to publicize how important bridge can be for the development of the youth, for the enjoyment of the elderly, for the integration of the disabled, for the avoidance discrimination.

We updated our Website, the lay-out is modern and, not only in my opinion, graphically pleasant and easily navigable. Recently we also developed its functional capabilities. Later Simon will provide a practical demonstration, showing you all the latest news. But we don't have to lay down and we need to keep pace with the present breakneck speed at which technology is developing, proposing everyday new solutions and applications that offer the chance to provide an increasingly high service and cannot be ignored if we want to be in position to fulfil our task.

But the functionality is not enough, communication requires specific professionalism and competence to assemble the news, to make visitors interested and curious, to find the arguments and at times also to create the news if they are in short supply, maintaining a continuity and not showing to be linked to chance moments.

A sore, in my opinion, point is that our specialized press mostly reports about bridge technique and might want to ignore, unlike almost all other sports, the event, the personage, the curiosity, the socialisation, the culture. The

background and the profiles of our discipline, its stories, even in my opinion, have to be told and emphasised if we want to step outside our intimate niche, if we want to step outside a sort of auto-ghettoisation that will end to suffocate us.

We must work on this, to study programmes and projects of course commensurate to our reality and our resources, but we absolutely must not ignore or disregard the matter because today, also considering the explosion and the proliferation of the social media, to stay behind and not to make use of the modern parameter of the communication will mean to have very harmful effects.

One of the main important subject, which in my opinion is perhaps the most important, concern the youth and the youth bridge development.

We are all perfectly aware that one of the peculiarities making our discipline attractive and fascinating is that it can be practiced, even at a very high level, from one's earliest to elderly years. We must not let our attention to youth bridge falter. Young people represent the continuity of tradition, evolution, and development of every human activity.

I believe that it is imperative to give all the possible attention to the youth bridge activity. This has to be the most effective and productive investment we can make, without skimping on efforts, to grant not only the future, but the very survival of our discipline.

The Youth Committee, therefore, is the fundamental apparatus to consider and take account of all matters relating to Youth Bridge and its development everywhere in the world, to take any appropriate initiative to promote and support teaching bridge in the schools, to stimulate the participation at the youth championships and events organised by the WBF, to consider important related issues and make recommendations to the EC for implementation. The activities and the initiatives of the Youth Committee shall be subsidised by the Youth Fund instituted by the WBF.

Thanks to great work did by the Youth Committee now the youth bridge is a great reality everywhere in the world and the NBOs take care of it investing resources and enthusiasm in its development. I am very proud of the continuous increasing in the number of kids, school pupils, who approach bridge and



practice our sport. We started at world level with the under 16 in 2013 after Atlanta, looking at the great number of kids attending this event. We started in 2014 in Istanbul with 7 teams and after six year in 2020 we will have 20 or more teams participating. Amazing!

All these matters and many others will be examined in depth later discussing the various items of the Agenda to find the right solution and I am confident that we will be able to be equal to this task, to make our Federation and our discipline even stronger.

Of course, as you well know, in the last in the last legislature we had to deal with some rough stuff due to the cheating that has shaken our community, spurred considerable debate, polemics and criticisms, caused a lot of problems, moral, practical and economical. We acted with serenity taking the necessary measures to assure that the offences are punishable and that such an occurrence will be prevented and avoided in the future.

We adopted, introduced and we have to continuously update and improve the appropriate tools and rules to assure that the play in our competitions could be correct and fair to guarantee that who does not want to observe the rules and assume an unethical behaviour could be submitted to the organs of justice.

Let me repeat, once again, what has to be clear and cannot be confused or misunderstood and cannot be object of any degraded speculation: The WBF has hardly worked to rogue, but unfortunately the tree producing the rotten apples is always fertile, mirroring the worse part of the human nature.

What is sure is that we did not want and will continue not to want and we did not accept and will continue not to accept such consideration like an axiom and all together, with the cooperation of every component of our community (this has to be an axiom and is absolutely essential), we will leave no stone unturned to extirpate this cancer.

Zero tolerance is and has to be our target.

Of course nobody has to be put in the stocks following a debate in the corridor or chatting, any fact or action that can involve unethical behavior has to be reported, without hesitation neither reticence, to the competent organs (TDs,

HLPC, Prosecutor), because any accused person, also being the last of the scoundrels, has the right to a fair trial and to a fair verdict. This is the indisputable principle should govern our lives.

To end this point, let me repeat once again (I often repeat some concept because I am firmly convinced that “repetita iuvant” repeating does good) that fortunately Bridge (and I am referring to BRIDGE in capital letters) is not this, has nothing on what above reported. Bridge is sport, culture, fun, education, socialization, fair-play, respect of the rules, rejecting of any discrimination: what we are promoting and we are successfully teaching to the youth, to the school pupils, attracted by bridge and its values. Bridge is s a way of being, not only of thinking.

Our legal status is: 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 GAISF – Global 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 –. And is a Code Signatory of WADA – World Antidoping Agency, recognized by UNESCO and partner of Peace & Sport..

Before closing my long report, despite we will discuss the matter later, I want to reiterate the importance of the celebration of the 20 years of recognition of the WBF as International Sport Federation by the IOC, as President Back said in his Welcome Message to the participants. I already awarded, on behalf of the WBF, our President Emeritus José Damiani yesterday at the Opening Ceremony of the Championship. Today in this first meeting of the legislature I want to officially say to him a great thank you as the first WBF President into the IOC for his unstinting efforts to achieve this great goal in the interest of our Federation and our Sport.

I don't want to anticipate the Treasurer Report, but since now I want to remark that the 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 and its application made by the Treasurer whom 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.

Dear Friends thank you for your attention and patience. I trust in this team, I trust in the work that all together we will do, I am confident in your support and advice, remaining equal to your own and at your complete disposal.

Un abbraccio