



“Bridge for Peace”

President’s Report to the WBF Congress 2020

Dear Delegates, dear Colleagues, dear Friends,

this year, for the first time in the history of the WBF, due to the Covid-19, the Congress, as we previously informed you, is celebrated, electronically, in accordance with the Measures to Combat Coronavirus of the Swiss Federal Council.

First of all, I would like to thank the law firm Kellerhals Carrard Lausanne/Sion Ltd for their great support and assistance in preparing and running the Congress

Unfortunately, I cannot start my report, as you can well imagine, without commenting and trying to make some sense of the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While we were doing the sum of a very positive biennium, looking forward to living and enjoying all together a new year of marvelous bridge adventures, we have been struck by this terrible storm. A real cataclysm that swept the globe, producing unimaginable pain and suffer. We have been forced to endure suffering, sacrifices, restrictions and deprivations that hindered our affections and even our intimacies. Our actions and relationships have been heavily conditioned and limited, our life and related habits have been radically altered.

And unlikely still nowadays we have to live with this dramatic situation, with this darn bug that is still expanding its deleterious effects, creating instability and uncertainty, causing significant economic and social damages, crumbling our beliefs and certainties and worryingly threatening our expectations for the near future. Science is struggling with all its forces to find the necessary medical countermeasures to win and eradicate the virus and to restore serenity and security into the world. We, all together, are called to give our own contribution in a spirit of courage and confidence, wisely acting and respecting the rules that are imposed upon ourselves during this time of great crisis and that, only, can effectively help us to stand and finally to get out through the tunnel.

Bridge activity, as all bridge players and bridge lovers are sadly aware, experienced and are still experiencing, is not immune to such effects.

As you are aware, the Management Committee, in light of the above, fully aware of the great difficulties encountered by the NBOs and their members and athletes, has taken some important urgent decisions.

Concerning the championships, with great distress we have been forced to cancel our programs and plans, practically considering the 2020 as a non existing year. Of course, in any case, the cancellation of the 2019 events does not have any influence on the terms and requirements provided by our rules.

At the same time, following the provisions from the Authorities, on the recommendations of the Medical & Prevention Commission, which did a great job, we approved the Risk Assessment in Bridge Activity to be adopted in emergencies.

The 2020 membership dues for the small NBOs (under 300 regular members) have been waived, while for all the other NBOs have been reduced by 30% (with a minimum of 300\$).

We decided to abolish, until the end of the legislature, the eligibility requirement that subordinates the right to participate in the Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup to the participation in the previous World Bridge Games.

We have been very pleased to receive appreciation's feedback from the NBOs, but in any case the WBF is constantly monitoring and trying to take decisions that can have the best handle on the situation and can offer help and support to its stakeholders.

Before starting our work, I have sadly to remind you that we all have suffered great losses with the sadly passing of several friends since our last Congress in Orlando 2018. In particular this 2020 is bringing an endless series of painful losses. I a wing beat great Friend left us: Elly Ducheyne, Max Bavin, Beth Palmer, Beverly Levy, Filippo Palma, Beto Cohen, Lynn Deas, Maria Teresa Lavazza, Justin Lall, Catherine d'Ovidio e Gianni Bertotto.

All of them were great friends, great champions, officers, eminent and unforgettable personalities, extraordinary people who worked with enthusiasm, dedication and passion for the organization, development and affirmation of our discipline, 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.

I want also to share a though to our Lebanese friends affected by the attack happened on 6th August in Beirut, when more of 100 of them were playing at the Bridge Club that was completely destroyed, causing casualties and wounded. Facing these horrible events, we are bewildered and speechless. Unfortunately, if facing the natural disaster some time we are powerless, facing human actions we must fill sorry for ourselves. We continue to strongly believe in our motto *Bridge for Peace*.

Coming to our works, I am pleased to report and inform.

Our secretary and friend Simon Fellus, after five years of profitable and successful cooperation decided to make a different choice of life and to achieve some new development in his professional activity. He decided to leave his position inside the WBF

and consequently our Headquarters in Lausanne. We want to express to Simon our gratitude and our great appreciation for the dedication, professionalism, competence in which he has performed his work and above all the friendship and esteem we had each other and will continue to be alive for the future. We wish Simon every success in the new working adventure who's about to undertake and we are confident that somehow or other he will continue to be part of our bridge world, of our great family. From September the 1st the position of Simon has been taken by Arianna Testa. Many of you already well know her, being the secretary to the Executive Council & Management Committee and since many years a member of the staff of our championships. To Arianna our sincere welcome in her new position in the WBF family and our best wishes of good work and success.

The Headquarters office in Lausanne in Bâtiment A of the Maison de Sport International is shared with EBL and starting from March, as decided by the Executive Council in the meeting of Wuhan, will move from the fourth to the third floor where there will be more adequate space, sharing (always together with the EBL) the floor with FIDE, with which we have a great ideological, social and organisational involvement.

Both the IOC and the Canton de Vaud provided several initiatives to support the International Federation with regard to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Concerning the IOC, we provided to forward the requested documentation that is now in processing by them. I don't know which will be the final result, but I am very pleased to remark that the IOC takes into account our needs, along with the other IFS. Concerning the Canton de Vaud, we have already received a bonus for the MSI Headquarter May rental. In addition, Canton de Vaud introduced, among the measures granted to the IFs located in Lausanne, a subsidy to partially cover the costs of the employees. We provided to forward to Canton de Vaud the related documentation. These measures, in addition to all the other facilities and benefits in tax and administration matters, remark and underline once again the importance of being recognized by the IOC and incorporated in Canton de Vaud. I have been also informed that the National Olympic Committees provided facilities and support for the recognized National Federation.

2019 was a very important a significant year for the WBF.

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

As announced the WBF – APBF NBOs Officers' Seminar was held in Singapore from 8th to 10th June. It followed both the successful NBO Officers' Seminar organized in Medellin in 2016 for CSB and in Cape Town in 2017 for ABF, according the new policy introduced by the Executive Council in 2015 to annual NBOs Officers' Seminar in the various Zones. This year the event, reserved for the Officers of the Federations affiliated to the Asia Pacific Bridge Federation, has been organized by the Asia Pacific Bridge Federation,

chaired by its President Esther Chodchoy Sophonpanich together with the Singapore Bridge Association and its Bridge Ambassador Jane Choo and hosted in Singapore, under the coordination of the WBF. The Seminar was extremely successful and was attended by the representatives of China, China Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Also, Australia attended the Seminar. Reports and presentations were made by the WBF representatives. Books, booklets and CDs concerning the WBF activity and several documents, continuing the theme of the Seminar, were delivered. Very profitable discussions followed the various reports and presentations giving opportunities to discuss the various items. The Seminar was very successful and appreciated by the participants who expressed their agreement by thanking the WBF for the initiative. All the Presentations and Reports are published on the Website.

In Opatija in August the World Transnational Youth Championship was held. The championship composed of pairs, teams, board-a-match teams, and individual competitions and an overall ranking in Triathlon are realized with the second highest participation, with 66 teams and 187 pairs in 4 age categories - U26, U20, U26 Woman and U16. In general Opatija once more proved to be a perfect venue for such youth events not only with its location but also with its vivid environment, being a friendly place to strangers, beautiful landscapes with every means for a nice leisure time and a with its cuisine of wide variety of foods. Everybody had fun which is a very important aspect of any youth event. Its known that the WBF youth events are generally played with high level of fair play without any significant disputes and Opatija 2019 was no exception. There was not a single challenge for directors' rulings. Nor any demand of a review. For the first time and experimentally, a part of the championships, the BAM, is played with tablets. During and after the event feedback was looked for and the outcome is highly conflicting. Although the negative and positive feedbacks were proportionally close in numbers, the negatives were quite strong if not harsh. The conclusion taken by the Youth Committee is that mainly for health reasons, no tournament with a length of more than 2 hours a session and a maximum of 2 sessions a day should be played with the existing tablets. If the tablets are to be implemented into bridge championships, they have to be much improved technologically. On the other hand, adaptation and adjustment of the rules for tablet tournaments are strongly recommended. As usual in the Youth events we supported several players, providing 21 full board accommodation. We are very pleased to expressed once again the gratitude to the Croatian Bridge Federation and its President Jurica Caric, the City of Opatija and the Amadria Park and its Manager Vedran Grzetic, with a special thanks to the Croatian Prime Minister, Mr. Andrej Plenkovic who personally welcomed the participant at the Opening Ceremony, attended also by the Ministry of Tourism, Mr Gari Cappelli, the President of the Croatian Olympic Committee, Mr. Zlatko Matesa and authorities from the City and the Region.

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. Let me repeat and underline, once again, that 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. 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 now we will have 20 or more national teams participating in the next championship. Amazing!

In Wuhan in September the World Bridge Teams Championship. I am sure that all the participants will maintain a wonderful memory in this very nice City and its warm welcome and hospitality. In particular the championship was very important, more important than in the past, because we increased the number of the qualified teams from 22 to 24 for each category and because we introduced for the first time the Mixed Teams, Wuhan Trophy, in addition to the Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup and d'Orsi Trophy, traditionally hosted in this event This means that we had in Wuhan 96 teams, 24 per each category, representing 42 affiliated Federations, to compete for the titles of World Champions and for the Medals. Another reason to enjoy the championship this year is that, as President Thomas Bach remarked in his welcome message, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the recognition by the IOC of the WBF as International Federation. This is a great goal that we achieved, a great reward for our history, tradition and values that in 2018, as you all know, received a strong and clear sign by the admission of bridge, together with all the other sports, at the Olympic Asian Games held in Indonesia. It was underlined that the venues looks perfect for such a bridge championship, very spacious, comfortable (both the playing area and the offices) and what is important for the participants very easy to reach walking from the recommended hotels and plenty of restaurants all around. Also the catering service arranged inside the venue looks very well organised and with cheap prices. Under the technical point of view, for this championship the surveillance has been implemented with 32 tables under control and 12 matches will be broadcast via internet. Under the point of view of the participants everything went very well and I can repeat, as already reported, that I never received such an expression of consensus by the players. Unfortunately we had to face some moments of difficulties concerning the broadcasting and the internet connection dealt with and resolved by our, let me say, exceptional technical staff. This situation is cause of dissatisfaction in the audience at home outside China. The surveillance system was up to the task and was very useful to the TDs during the event and also to the Championship Committee when it had to deal with a couple of cases, perfectly clarifying what happened and so being of great help in taking the right decision. Also being aware that there are aspects of the organisation and management that, thanks to the modern technology in continuous development, can and have to be improved and perfected, I personally believe that the championship was very successful, satisfying all the expectations. I am pleased to thank, once again, the Chinese Contract Bridge

Association, the Wuhan People Government and the Local Organising Committee for having given us the opportunity to hold such a successful event in Wuhan.

In Wuhan we installed the new Executive Council, we had the first meeting and practically we started the new legislature. I take the occasion to express once again my gratitude to the Friends and Colleagues 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 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.

In this first meeting of the E.C. I reported about the principles governing the WBF, the activity done and the plans and programs for the incoming legislature and for the future, about which you are already aware because my report has been immediately published. I am very pleased to say that the Executive Council unanimously shared my report.

Repeating what I have already above reported, while we were doing the sum of a very positive year, looking forward to living and enjoying all together a new year of marvelous bridge adventures, we have been struck by this terrible pandemic flu.

All the bridge friends around the world have been informed of the generous and significant gesture of Mr. Chen Yeh, bridge champion and humanitarian from Chinese Taipei, who donated 100.000 \$, through the WBF, to the Italian people. Nevertheless, I want to officially remark and underline it at the WBF Congress. This donation has made with magnanimity by Mr. Yeh, through the WBF, to let people know that bridge players are indeed a part of the world community and do care about those who are suffering. The Management Committee, moved and full of gratitude, unanimously approved to award Mr. Yeh with the WBF Gold Medal.

Covid-19 had a great impact on our activity, but stimulated us to do our best, to be constantly in contact to face and try to solve the arising daily problems and situations, to maintain and consolidate our internal and external relations. The Management Committee met periodically every month, took several important decisions, already published and well known by all of you that have been always promptly notified. We examined and discussed several important items concerning our activity. The various Committees, the Secretariat and I personally provided the institutional activity.

I am pleased to report to you that WADA gave the final approval to the new WBF Anti-Doping Rules, elaborated by our Medical & Prevention Commission together with GAISF and International Testing Agency, approved by the Management Committee, which will be

in effect from 1st January 2021. According to the new rules, that will be published, the Management Committee provided to adjust the policy related to the Doping Hearing Panel and the TUE Committee and their composition, already been published. The technical/medical amendments introduced by WADA, and by us adopted, does not practically change anything for us except the sanctions in case of doping. As you sadly know we experienced for a case happened in Orlando an unpleasant situation: with the new rules it cannot arise again.

Unfortunately, we had to face another very bad and unacceptable situation due to the explosion of the online cheating. Immediately the Management Committee reacted with a statement, reaffirming the strong revulsion, the unwavering rejection and the firm condemnation of this kind of aberrant and unacceptable behaviour which, wherever it occurs, causes great harm to bridge and threaten its credibility; reiterating its full support of the players in fighting against cheating and improper behaviours, adopting all measures needed to prevent and to repress these actions; remarking that the participation in WBF events are subject to the approval of the Credential Committee, which carefully considers the submitted requests regarding players involved in suspicious cases, wherever they occurred.

But this is cannot remain a simple declaration of intent, because we are firmly convinced that the fight against the cancer of cheating in bridge, everywhere it's happens, is a primary mission for the WBF, Conferential Zones and NBOs. For this reason, the Management Committee appointed a restricted Committee that quickly has to provide ad hoc official rules to allow us to act and to sanction. The image of bridge cannot and must not be deformed and the regularity of the game cannot and must not be infected by these vile behaviours. I am confident that at the celebration of the Residual Congress these rules will be in effect. But to win the war we need the indispensable and blindly support of all of you, the NBOs. Altogether, linked by a common intent and even counting on the personal individual contribution of each of us, we can (and we must) achieve the result.

Several other matters have been discussed and plans have been put on the table concerning the administration, organisation, communication, online bridge, technology that will be step by step announced as soon as, I am confident quickly, they will come to fruition.

Dear Friends, in conclusion I fill I can say that the biennium ended with a very satisfactory first year and a second year of stiff resistance to maintain our purposes and to fulfil our duties, according the extraordinary dramatic situation that has involved us. This conclusions reflect also the financial results, as you can see by the Report of the Treasurer, to whom goes our congratulations for the excellent job done in this delicate historical situation, confirming once again that we are in good hands.

Despite the great difficulties linked to the precariousness of the situation, my colleagues of the board, the officers, the secretariat, the consultants, the committees, the entire

personnel and staff (to whom I am pleased and proud to express my deep thankfulness) and I personally committed ourselves to do our best. A special thank you to our President Emeritus, always with us with his support and precious advice, as well as to the Hon. Secretary and the secretariat again for the unusual great charge of work due to the electronic Congress and very well performed. I hope that we have been able to satisfy, at least in part, your expectations.

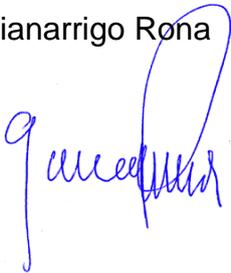
I am really proud and I want above all to thank you, the representative of the NBOs and Zonal Conferences for your remarkable work made in your own countries with dedication and sacrifice, facing many problems, difficulties and restrictions. I was in contact with several of you and I want to thank you for your confidence, support and cooperation that were and are very important for us and even more than in the past stimulated and are still stimulating my colleagues and me.

We are in a solid position, ready to meet the challenge of the second biennium of the legislature with renewed trust, but unaltered dedication and strong will to accomplish our institutional objectives. We are confident in your usual fundamental great support and cooperation.

Before closing my report, I want to share with you a fond thought to the people and families, everywhere in the world, affected by the outbreak, expressing all of them our friendship, solidarity and closeness.

Thank you all for your attention

Gianarrigo Rona

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gianarrigo Rona', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.