



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
Marrakech, Morocco  
24<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> August at 15:10**

**In Attendance**

Mr Jan Kamras, President  
Mr José Damiani, President Emeritus  
Mr Adam Wildavsky, Hon. Secretary  
Mr Marc de Pauw, Treasurer  
Mr Marcelo Caracci, Member  
Mr Igor Chalupec, Member  
Mrs Catherine Draper, HLPC Member  
Mr Nader Hanna, Member  
Mr Gonzalo Herrera, Member  
Mrs Helen Kruger, Member  
Mr Eric Laurant, Member  
Mr Fernando Lema, Member  
Mr Kirubakara Moorthy, Member  
Mr Gilad Ofir, Member  
Mrs Kari-Anne Opsal, Member  
Mr Bernard Pascal, Member  
Mr Franck Riehm, Member  
Mr Douglas (Kip) Rotchell, Member  
Mr AJ Stephani, Member  
Mrs Suzi Subeck, Member  
Mr Ben Thompson, Member  
Mrs Yannan Wang, Member

**Also, in Attendance**

Mr David Harris, General Counsel  
Ms Arianna Testa, Secretary to the Executive Council  
Ms Lilian Sun, Interpreter

**Excused**

Mr Chip Martel, Member

The President called the meeting to order at 15:10. He declared a quorum, and the meeting proceeded as follows.

## 1. Opening & Greetings

The President welcomed the Council to Marrakech and to the Meeting.

### NBO matters

The President informed the Council that despite the request of last year, Mexico decided to remain in Zone 2.

Mr Laurant reported that Lebanese players approached, expressing their will to leave Zone 1 and join Zone 4.

The EC agreed that such a request must come from the NBO, and the Lebanese Bridge Federation will be informed that the EC has discussed the matter.

The Bolivian NBO ceased to exist, and a new NBO has been created.

### Small Federations

The EC unanimously approved having a World Small Federations Championship, a representative event, in principle, played online, at least in the early stages.

The Small Fed Committee, together with the Championship Committee, will sort out the criteria for eligibility (e.g. maximum number of members to be included).

### The 46<sup>th</sup> World Teams Championships, Marrakech

The President reported about the ongoing Championships.

All the series are complete, with the full attendance (24x4).

In the Transnational event 36 new teams registered.

The number of drop-ins from the main Championships is still not known; the expectation is 60/70 teams.

Usually many local teams participate, but that can't be expected in Morocco.

Veering slightly off-topic, Mr Adam Wildavsky proposed the creation of a Publicity committee.

Mr Ben Thompson volunteered to develop marketing strategies and a communications plan.

The organisation in Marrakesh has been very good and has exceeded expectations. A very nice Opening Ceremony, and lots of security.

We had an issue concerning the 6-8 BBO operators that the local organising committee was supposed to provide; they couldn't get even 4 capable of recording the bidding and play correctly.

Another issue was with the internet setup. We did not get what Hans van Staveren had asked for since the beginning.

#### Financial aspects:

- We offered significant discounts for Moroccan entries.
- We have relaxed some non-essential requirements, to make it easier for local organisers
- We are expecting a EUR 50-60k profit.

#### Competition / operations:

Mr Eitan Levy held a TD meeting before the Championships started.

- New “yellow card” system was introduced.
- Better rotation of TDs and floor management.
- Consistent checking for phones and other forbidden devices, at the tables and on the way to bathrooms.
- Much more positive and collaborative interaction between players and TDs.

#### Credentials/Eligibility:

- No special cases worth mentioning.
- Our database is now very good, well organised and with solid information.

#### Future Events

##### WBG 2024 – Buenos Aires

The principal contract will be between the sponsor and the WBF; we have already agreed on all the main points. Our contacts are Pablo Lambardi and Mauricio Macri. We will hopefully be able to sign the contract before we leave Marrakech.

There will be a subsidiary agreement with the Argentinian Federation.

From their side they are seeking some form of commitment from the City of Buenos Aires.

The dates are October 20 to November 7 or October 19 to November 6 (3 days for the setup and 1 day breakdown included).

This is traditionally the event with the best financial outcome. In the past, we had more/larger sponsors. While the IOC doesn't allow tobacco sponsorship for full Olympic sports, President Emeritus José Damiani believes it could be acceptable for associate sports such as Bridge.

The Format will be the usual one for the “Olympiad”, and there will be a National Pairs Championship.

The EC agrees with trying to have at least 2 years of events scheduled in advance.

## Youth Transnational

Greece has periodically offered to host a World Youth Championship; they may have a suitable venue outside Thessaloniki.

Sweden has complained that World Youth Championships often clash with the Swedish festival. Jan Kamras suggested that the best way to avoid this is for the SBF to host the next one. They can't do it in 2024 but will study it for 2025.

## NBO Seminar

The last NBO Seminar was in 2022 in Cali. The next one should probably be held in Asia. Mr Kirubakara Moorthy will check for possibilities in India, and Bangkok would be another good option in connection with the APBF Championships 2024.

We should think about a more interactive format to make it more appealing for the NBOs, and after the Seminar we must ensure a proper follow-up.

## 2025 World Teams Championships

Our dream was to hold the WTC in Bermuda (the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bermuda Bowl), but it doesn't seem realistic. Apart from anything else, there is no suitable venue.

Macau is a possibility. The Galaxy Group has a new convention centre, surrounded by many hotels and a very convenient location with airport and hotels.

## 2025 World Youth Championships

Jan Kamras is talking to the Swedish Bridge Federation about hosting this one [see above].

## 2026 World Bridge Series ("Rosenblum")

This Transnational event is best held in Europe to ensure a high participation. There are no candidates yet, but the newly renovated congress centre in Nice would be perfect. Germany is another country that should be pursued.

Chris & Donna Compton suggested a good convention centre in Omaha (Nebraska).

## Statutes/Voting rights

The EC discussed changing the allocation of votes at Congress from "one country, one vote" to something taking the size of an NBO into consideration. There are NBOs with 25-30 members, while the USA has 120k members. Each gets one vote today, which doesn't seem fair.

The EC will work on a proposal to be submitted to the next Congress.

The meeting was adjourned at 17.50 to be reconvened on Friday the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> August at 10:00**

**In Attendance**

Mr Jan Kamras, President  
Mr José Damiani, President Emeritus  
Mr Adam Wildavsky, Hon. Secretary  
Mr Marc de Pauw, Treasurer  
Mr Marcelo Caracci, Member  
Mr Igor Chalupec, Member  
Mrs Catherine Draper, HLPC Member  
Mr Nader Hanna, Member  
Mr Gonzalo Herrera, Member  
Mrs Helen Kruger, Member  
Mr Eric Laurant, Member  
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Mr Franck Riehm, Member  
Mr Douglas (Kip) Rotchell, Member  
Mr AJ Stephani, Member  
Mrs Suzi Subeck, Member  
Mr Ben Thompson, Member  
Mrs Yannan Wang, Member

**Also, in Attendance**

Mr David Harris, General Counsel  
Ms Arianna Testa, Secretary to the Executive Council  
Ms Lilian Sun, Interpreter

The President called the meeting to order at 10:00. He declared a quorum, and the meeting proceeded as follows.

Investigation Committee

Mr Eric Laurant reported to the EC as follows:

“The good news is that the committee has less work than previously. We have offered to 6-7 players over the last 2-3 years (last year only 1) the opportunity to agree not to come to WBF/EBL tournaments anymore; otherwise, we would have to launch a full investigation process. They all have accepted, and their files are then sent to their NBO only. The duration of exclusion is not specified, but we are not expecting to see them again. Controls have improved to prevent the leaking of

outside information (personal by checking phones and smartwatches, and technical with delayed broadcast and results display).

Digital bidding boxes should improve things further (broadly and increasingly positive attitude to this from the playing community).

Among many positive aspects, they make the work of both TDs and journalists easier.

The playing community feels that the tournaments are “cleaner” than before and that there is a better general atmosphere. The players also recognise that we are taking their previous complaints seriously.”

### IT Matters

At 10:25 Mr Fotis Skoularikis joined the meeting to report on the IT situation and the Objectivity project as follows:

We observed a 600% increase in website activity at the beginning of the event.

Objectivity’s suggestions have helped a lot with website stability. In particular, errors displayed are way down, due to fewer malicious or misbehaving robots crawling our site. Web crawling is typically positive – it can help with getting advertisement placement.

Phase 1: suggestions implemented.

Phase 2: will get underway after these championships.”

The EC thanked Fotis for his report.

At 10:35 the discussion returned to the investigation committee matter.

Mr Eric Laurant stressed that we are interested only in top-level players who played in World or Zonal events, including qualifying events, in the past 5 years.

### Development project

Mr Franck Riehm reported on the development project.

The first step has been launching a survey. It would be useful to share knowledge on teaching & tools and have a curated library/resource list on the WBF site.

The challenge in smaller Zones is mainly that few people are working in bridge, so we need people to do the teaching, recruiting, and administrating.

It is important to recognise that what works in one culture may not work in another; we must promote and share our discussion of goals, vision, and best practices.

In the Netherlands, they are running a very successful program for the third time, bringing in 10k new members so far.

Mr Eric Laurant will share the details.

About reducing isolation, Poland is doing something similar.

Mr Jose Damiani intervened on the strategy of promotion of bridge: there are 3 parts,

- Youth (long term) – teaching bridge in schools should work everywhere. First, we should teach the teachers and only then approach schools (must be ready to go if the school agrees.) Minibridge is very important because the students get playing in 15 minutes.

- Clubs (medium term) – not playing much at night anymore, so hard to reach (working) adults; can use the internet to access; also, clubs need to be more welcoming.
- Retired/retiring people (short term) – there are always many new people every year looking for a suitable and enjoyable activity.

Norway has an annual “fire soul” award for those who work passionately for bridge. Very prestigious, voted on by members.

French schools will now have to teach bridge by order of the French Ministry of Education.

We need a playbook and scripts – overcoming “sales objections” (for getting bridge into schools).

What the French Federation is doing:

- “Before Bridge” program to bring people into the game.
- Distribute 10k “bridge boxes” ... complete set to get going asap with playing.
- Scratches where the prize is always 10 free bridge lessons.
- Minibridge app.
- “le petit bridge” card set – for very young people; 40 cards; also used in Netherlands, Spain, and Great Britain.

The EC thanked Mr Riehm for his report.

### Computer Vision

Mr Ben Thompson presented the demo and discussed opportunities and next steps. The EC showed interest in following the development. The researchers will contact Mr Eric Laurant (Investigation Committee).

At 12.30 Ben Thompson left the meeting.

### Olympic Virtual Series

Mr. Damiani reported on the Olympic Virtual Series and showed a video of the Singapore week.

Bridge was a candidate to participate in the first edition, but our media exposure was judged insufficient to qualify for this very limited number of participating sports. It would have been a precious opportunity to show that Bridge uses AI and that we have all the tools available.

13.00 Break

At 14.00 the meeting resumed (absent: Ben Thompson, Chip Martel, Nader Hanna, Marcelo Caracci).

### Approval of the Minutes

The Executive Council unanimously approved the minutes of the previous Executive Council meeting held in Wroclaw, Poland, in August 2022.

The Executive Council unanimously approved the minutes of the Management Committee meeting held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in March 2023.

### Approval of the Reports

The Executive Council unanimously approved the President's Report.

The Executive Council unanimously approved the Treasurer's Report (with the abstention of the Treasurer, Mr Marc de Pauw).

### Russia and Belarus suspension

Jan Kamras reported about the IOC recommendation to allow individual Russian and Belarussian athletes to compete.

Ukrainian athletes would accept Russian athletes under a neutral flag.

After an extensive discussion, the EC decided not to take a different decision from the one already in place (also given that there are no representative events for another year).

Until the IOC decides for Paris, we leave it as it is.

### Youth matters

The World Youth Championships were for the first time held at the same venue, in Veldhoven, as the EBL Youth Event, with one immediately following the other. We registered a great participation with 96 teams overall: 20 teams each in the U16, U21 and U31; 24 teams in the U26; and 12 teams in the U26W.

During the EBL Youth coach seminar participants agreed that the new U31 category was appreciated.

The U16 teams paid no entry fee. Zone 5 sent a team, aided by a WBF subsidy.

For the future we would like to introduce a "super mixed" category, on a trial basis, at the Youth Transnationals.

At 16.30 Mr Ben Thompson re-joins the meeting.

Mr Laurant shared the concerns of a Dutch coach who does not favour the Super mixed category. There could be problems getting funds from the NOC.

Mr Igor Chalupiec reported that some women are concerned. Their competitions are getting smaller, the quality is decreasing, and the mixed might kill the women category.



### Disciplinary/Juridical matters

Mr David Harris, the General Counsel, informed the EC that we will receive a modest part of our costs back for the “German doctors” case.

Regarding the “Non match” Tunisia vs Israel in R15 of the Wuhan Cup, after an extensive discussion it was pointed out that apparently the players were under pressure from the Tunisian Government. The Tunisian behaviour represents a clear breach of our Statutes and player commitment form. The case will be referred to the Prosecutor under the Disciplinary Code. An investigation will take place to decide how to proceed.

After the presentation of the Tunisia-Israel match case, Mr Bernard Pascal left the meeting, expressing disagreement with how the case was handled so far.

The meeting was adjourned at 17.00 to be reconvened on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> August at 09:00**

#### **In Attendance**

Mr Jan Kamras, President  
Mr Adam Wildavsky, Hon. Secretary  
Mr Marc de Pauw, Treasurer  
Mr Marcelo Caracci, Member  
Mr Igor Chalupec, Member  
Mrs Catherine Draper, HLPC Member  
Mr Nader Hanna, Member  
Mr Gonzalo Herrera, Member  
Mrs Helen Kruger, Member  
Mr Eric Laurant, Member  
Mr Fernando Lema, Member  
Mr Kirubakara Moorthy, Member  
Mr Gilad Ofir, Member  
Mrs Kari-Anne Opsal, Member  
Mr Bernard Pascal, Member  
Mr Franck Riehm, Member  
Mr Douglas (Kip) Rotchell, Member  
Mr AJ Stephani, Member  
Mrs Suzi Subeck, Member  
Mr Ben Thompson, Member  
Mrs Yannan Wang, Member

#### **Also, in Attendance**

Mr David Harris, General Counsel

Ms Arianna Testa, Secretary to the Executive Council  
Ms Lilian Sun, Interpreter

### **Excused**

Mr José Damiani, President Emeritus  
Mr Chip Martel, HLPC Member

The President called the meeting to order at 09:00. He declared a quorum, and the meeting proceeded as follows.

Mr Eitan Levy, Chairman of the TD Committee, presented his report to the EC. Mr Levy introduced a few new things (e.g. the “yellow card”). He asked directors to interact calmly with the players. Marc van Beijsterveldt is now in charge of the rotation and schedule of the TDs as the Administrative chief TD.

Mr Levy raised some requests for EC approval:

- Changed TD regulations, one material one about disciplinary action against a director (simplify the process, make EC final decision/appeal body).
- Allowing a TD to assume a temporary title at an event, if required.
- Antonio Riccardi is retiring after Marrakech. The TD Committee recommends Laurie Kelso to replace him.
- Formalise WBF TD level for 3 excellent American TDs.

The Executive Council unanimously approved the requests.

The Executive Council requested a formal written appraisal after each tournament and to be provided with a reason if a TD won't be invited again to our events.

The Executive Council also unanimously approved the award of the WBF Gold Medal to Antonio Riccardi during the Closing Ceremony.

### Anti-cheating laws 73&89

New versions of these laws were proposed, to take effect on 1 January 2024.

The Executive Council approved, Mr Adam Wildavsky voted against, and Mr AJ Stephani abstained.

### Annual Dues

The EC discussed the need to increase the Annual Dues. It would be helpful to have an automatic CPI increase of the dues to cover the increase in our recurring costs due to inflation.

This will be one of the topics during the next Congress (2024).

Mr Geoffrey Borg, IMSA CEO, joined the meeting and presented IMSA and the upcoming activities.

## Championship Formats

The EC discussed the question of seating rights – should we have “blind” seating for the Knockouts as well?

The top players on the EC (and the members generally) are largely in favour. Mrs Catherine Draper will refer to the HLPC for comment.

- “Olympiad”:
  - National Pairs (2016) or transnational mixed (2008 & 2012)?
  - EC agreed that there should be a series of national events.
  - EC agreed that National Pairs should have no limit to the number of pairs per country.
  - It is important to have national pairs championships – they provide an opportunity for strong pairs from moderately strong countries to win a World championship for their country.
- Entry fees & duration
  - It is expensive for NBOs to fund 2 weeks, but 2 weeks gives high integrity of results.
  - Idea: offer 2 entry fee options – round robin only, or full 2 weeks.
    - If pay for RR only; NBO or players can fund 2<sup>nd</sup> week entry, up to them. No decision was taken.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.00 to be reconvened on Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup>.

## **Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> August at 09:00**

### **In Attendance**

Mr Jan Kamras, President  
Mr Adam Wildavsky, Hon. Secretary  
Mr Marc de Pauw, Treasurer  
Mr Marcelo Caracci, Member  
Mr Igor Chalupec, Member  
Mrs Catherine Draper, HLPC Member  
Mr Nader Hanna, Member  
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Mr Kirubakara Moorthy, Member  
Mr Gilad Ofir, Member  
Mr Bernard Pascal, Member  
Mr Douglas (Kip) Rotchell, Member  
Mr AJ Stephani, Member  
Mrs Suzi Subeck, Member  
Mr Ben Thompson, Member  
Mrs Yannan Wang, Member

### **Also, in Attendance**

Mr David Harris, General Counsel

Ms Arianna Testa, Secretary to the Executive Council

Ms Lilian Sun, Interpreter

### **Excused**

Mr José Damiani, President Emeritus

Mrs Kari-Anne Opsal, Member

Mr Franck Riehm, Member

The President called the meeting to order at 09:00. He declared a quorum, and the meeting proceeded as follows.

### **Zonal Reports**

All the Zonal reports were circulated before the meeting and were read by all the members.

The EC discussed Zonal / NBO allocation of spots in the WTC.

The USA is allowed 2 teams if having a minimum of 145k members. This is based on a decades-old “gentlemen’s agreement”. Although the US no longer fulfils that requirement (partly due to the pandemic), the general feeling was to accept it, but the rationale is opaque. Therefore, we should establish some principles that support the current situation but also make it clear when any NBO would have even one, not to mention two, guaranteed spots.

The members expressed different opinions, including giving one spot to the USA and the second spot to be decided within the Zonal trials. After discussion, they agreed not to change the status quo.

Mr Kip Rotchell asked for Zone 5 to be allowed a Zonal, rather than National, team. The Zone has many NBOs, but they all have very few members. No decision was taken but the matter was taken under advisement. Maybe to be considered in the Youth category?

At 9.40, Mr Marcelo Caracci, Mr Nader Hanna, Mr Kip Rotchell and Mr Ben Thompson left and Mr José Damiani joined the meeting.

### **Zone 1**

Mr Laurant commented on its TD courses. They are conducted professionally, are popular, and welcome TDs from other Zones.

Maybe the EBL program should become a WBF program, as it would increase the quality of the TDs worldwide.

The good take-home message from Veldhoven is that WBF/EBL organised the event together, without the assistance of the local NBO. It can also be considered for future events. On the other hand, it has become very expensive, so care has to be exercised in this respect.

Mr Kamras proposed to appoint Mr Igor Chalupec to the Finance Committee and the Credentials Committee.

The Executive Council unanimously approved (with the abstention of Mr Igor Chalupec).

Mr Kamras submitted the request from BAMSA for financial support of their ambitious and very important projects. The WBF was asked to initially contribute EUR 10k from the Development Fund.

The Executive Council unanimously approved.

At 10.30 the President thanked all the members for their active participation and fruitful contribution and was pleased that everyone had the chance to express their opinions. The meeting was adjourned *sine die*.