



International Sport Federation (IF) recognized by the International Olympic Committee

Jan Kamras
President

President's Report to the Executive Council Meeting in Marrakech August 24-27, 2023

Dear friends

The following, together with my Activity Report of November 2022 and President's Report of March 2023 (both appended to the meeting documents), is a report of my activities since elected WBF President.

Meetings and Visits

On April 10, together with Arianna Testa, I attended a Visio meeting with FISU Sports Director Juan Carlos Holgado and Sports Manager Alejandro Guerra. We discussed the renewal of our "Collaboration Convention" and all matters relating to our relationship. On April 29 we held an internal follow-up Zoom meeting among Arianna, Gilad Ofir and Geert Magerman. A synopsis can be derived from an email included among the meeting documents.

On April 15-19, together with Marc De Pauw, I visited Buenos Aires to investigate the possibilities of arranging the 2024 World Bridge Games (formerly the "Olympiad") there. You have already received my trip report, which is also included in the meeting documents.

On May 21 I met via Zoom with Donna and Chris Compton at their request. They would like to investigate the possibilities of hosting a World Championship in Omaha, Nebraska, where they have good contacts. The venue was presented by a representative of the city. It looks very suitable for our purposes. Possible dates were discussed, and 2024 is out. Suitable dates may be available in August 2025 (WTC) and definitely in 2026 and 2027. To be followed up.

On May 23-25, together with Marc De Pauw, I visited Marrakech to inspect and secure the final arrangements for the WTC. We met all persons involved and defined all halls and rooms, as well as some EC activities. There are still aspects of the organisation that are not clear – specifically some presumed WBF requirements that are simply not factual. The LOC has given up all aspects of the arrangements to a local agency, with an arrangement that motivates the agent to supply services whether requested by us or not. Since this visit we have spent an enormous amount of time and effort in convincing the LOC (which had



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asked us for substantial financial help due to higher-than-expected costs) that many of the costly items are not necessary.

On June 10-13 I visited the European Transnational Championships in Strasbourg, where I among other things was invited to participate in some EBL Executive Committee meetings. The EBL had several points it wanted to discuss with the WBF. I will let Eric Laurant report on those but, as a general comment, we see eye to eye on most matters.

I also used the opportunity to discuss Marrakech preparations with all our operational staff. This shows one of the many advantages of sharing resources with the EBL, in addition to the obvious financial ones.

On June 15-18 I was invited by the APBF to Hongkong on the occasion of the Zonal Championships and APBF meetings. In addition to various formal occasions I held informal meetings with several officials. A venue for the 2025 WTC was discussed without any concrete results. I also suggested that the APBF should hold its Zonal Championships earlier in the season, since it makes it very difficult to know the WTC participants so late. If June is the only possibility for local reasons, then they could do as Zone 1 and hold its WTC Qualifier the year before. They took note.

On June 19-20 I took advantage of having two days free before going to Singapore by visiting Macau China, initially organised by Mr. James Guan. He is well connected with two of the main hotel groups, MGM, and Sands. I was very generously received and together with representatives from the Macau Sports Authority we visited various possible hotel venues owned by those groups. In Hongkong at the prize-giving ceremony I had met with Mr. Abby Chiu, head of a financial services company partially sponsoring the APBF event. He is well connected with a third hotel group, the Galaxy Macau. I visited their venue as well and was very impressed. Unlike the previous venues that were integrated with the respective hotels, Galaxy has a completely new conference centre in a separate building with several hotels around it. The facilities are excellent both in size and equipment, which is state of the art with sound-absorbing materials in the playing halls. The venue is available September 10-28, 2025, and they have received a list of our basic requirements and a sample contract. Financing would come largely from the sports authority. The government has decided to diversify away from mainly relying on gambling, and mind sports seem attractive for that purpose. This may also be the background to a pre-pandemic proposal from Mr Guan to stage five editions of the WTC in Macau. The old part is very European, and the new part is like Las Vegas, but much more modern. It has its own airport but most convenient for non-Chinese is to fly to Hongkong from where there is a long bridge all the way to Macau.



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On June 21-25, together with José Damiani, I attended the first ever IOC Olympic Esports Week where Bridge was invited together with 15 other sports to present its activities in the electronic and AI field in what was called the “Free to Play Zone”. We had quite a large pavilion where we showed Funbridge/BBO robot challenges, BBO matches between invited teams (e.g. a match between European and Chinese juniors), and play on Lovebridge tablets, as well as tutoring visitors in various forms of the game. This was preceded by qualification robot events which brought some income which, after deducting costs, left an amount to be shared among participating NBOs. The finals were free of charge for the 600+ participants.

My thanks go to José, who has been the promoter and organiser of the project from the beginning. He also managed to negotiate the local costs down from a level that would not have left anything to share with the NBOs, by getting a contribution from the IOC. The cooperation from 52Entertainment is also much appreciated.

On July 19-23 I visited the NABC Summer Nationals in Chicago. I had several meetings with the new ACBL Executive Director Bronia Jenkins. She is very dynamic, progressive, and eager to cooperate and interact more with the international community than has been the case at times in the past. She is starting several new projects, including one aimed at the “social” players. She is positive to the new WBF World Tour and would also like to revive the “America vs Europe” (previously (mis)named the Buffet Cup) but in a more serious form.

Together with Eric Laurant I also had a meeting with Lovebridge, in preparation for Marrakech.

I met briefly with the RealBridge persons in charge for an update on the “Small Federation Championship” idea.

I obviously spent a lot of time among the players from many countries, to hear their views on various topics. There were lots of heated discussions around the “cards or tablets” topic for top international competition. From anecdotal evidence there is a large majority that wants to continue playing with cards, but most of them liked the bidding and scoring on tablets.

On July 31-August 1 I visited the Swedish Bridge Festival and met with several board members. They complain that the world youth events always collide with their festival which therefore misses a lot of their own, as well as international, youth players. Their festival is always in the same period every year and has been “forever”. I used the opportunity to tell them that there is a simple way for them to avoid this, namely to arrange a Youth Championship themselves. This would enable them to place it right before or after their festival, thus even getting some increased participation. They will discuss it internally.





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On August 2-7 I attended the World Youth Teams Championships in Veldhoven, the Netherlands. Gilad and I will report separately on this, but I cannot omit expressing how satisfying it is to see all these young players, aged 10 (I believe) to 30, engaging in tough competition while showing great camaraderie afterwards. The venue lends itself to many activities away from the green tables. I particularly enjoyed watching them mingle among nationalities in the evening, playing all kinds of games (except “normal” bridge, some played “goulash”). A typical game could feature a Norwegian with an American against a Brit with a Dane. The atmosphere at the packed closing ceremony was also great, with lots of cheers for all receivers of awards, including the very popular Joan Gerard award for the most popular player in each category where it is only the players themselves who vote.

Ongoing Activities

The R&R Committee together with members of the Championships Committee has concluded its substantial work on updating the General and Supplemental Conditions of Contest. Please see my March report for details. Thank you to all members for your contributions.

The WBT “dry run” season is progressing nicely, with several additional events applying for inclusion. Herman De Wael and Anna Gudge are doing a great job in translating the data from events into the system. We are constantly evaluating the events to see if our preliminary classifications are realistic, noticing some that needs moving up and some down.

We have now concluded 20 events and the current ranking is here:

<http://championships.worldbridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/WBT2023OverallRanking.pdf>

A lot of time has been spent on preparations for this summer’s championships, which have not been easy. Arranging the Youth Championships immediately following, and in the same venue as, the European Youth Transnational has been a new experience presenting some coordination problems but was overall a positive experience that has also saved on costs for both. This will be reported on separately.

The website and firewall improvements by Objectivity are now largely applied. In a two-step process our IT department implemented it first for the EBL, before Strasbourg, as a testing ground. The results were satisfactory, and these solutions will now be implemented also for the WBF. F. Skoularikis will report in more detail.



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As can be seen from my visits above, we succeeded in our efforts to be invited to the "Free-to-Play Zone" at the Olympic Esports Week in Singapore.

We managed to assist both Zones 3 and 4 in solving the problems referred to in my March report.

Thank you for your attention and I am looking forward to seeing you all in Marrakech.

Best regards



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