

## **ZONE 8 REPORT**

by Pierre Chavannaz

The African Bridge Federation (ABF) was founded after the decision in 2000 by the WBF to separate the nations of the African continent from Zone 4 (BFAME). Zone 8 consists of all participating countries within Africa plus Madagascar, Reunion and Mauritius; although 20 nations are affiliated, only 10 pay yearly dues.

Barat Bhardwaj of Kenya, President from 2000 to 2005, was replaced by Tushar Pujara, also from Kenya. Other officers are Bernard Pascal (Egypt), Vice President; Julius Butkow (South Africa) joint Secretary; Pierre Chavannaz (France) joint Secretary and Treasurer; and Mrs Chafika Tak Tak (Morocco), Board Member. ABF has a web site ([www.africanbridgefed.net](http://www.africanbridgefed.net)) that is so far not very active. Contact coordinates for Board members and NBOs are provided, but the site is really just starting life. In time it will become the hub for ABF activities and archives.

The first federation congress took place in Abidjan, Ivory Coast in May 2001. With only South Africa (4 players) and Kenya (10 players) participating, this couldn't be considered a legitimate Zonal qualification event.

The second "official" African Zonal Championship was originally scheduled to be held in Botswana, but was eventually moved to South Africa. The event, held at The Links in Johannesburg in June, 2003, was the vehicle to select the Zone 8 representatives for the Monte Carlo Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup. There were eight teams in the Open Series and four in the Women's, which was considered a reasonable turnout. South Africa and Egypt were the hot favorites in both events, but in the Women's, Zimbabwe surprised Egypt to edge them out for second. As Zimbabwe was ineligible, South Africa went instead. None of the zonal representatives fared well at the World Bridge Team Championships in Monte Carlo later that year.

The third congress, held in Casablanca, Morocco in May 2005, was the true start of African Zonal championships, complete with bulletins and multi-nation participation in each of the three events: 7 Bermuda Bowl teams, 5 Venice Cup teams, and three Senior Bowl entries. Egypt won all three Zonal Trials, with South Africa second in the Bermuda Bowl division, Morocco second in the Venice Cup and Senior divisions. This time, our representatives made a better showing in Estoril, where the World Bridge Team Championships were held: Egypt finished seventh in the Bermuda Bowl round robin before losing convincingly to Sweden in the quarterfinals and South Africa was in contention at the end only to fall short. In the Venice Cup round robin, Egypt finished a creditable 10th.

The fourth Zone 8 Playoffs were held in Mombasa, Kenya in April 2007. Both the Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup divisions attracted one team fewer than in 2005, but a fourth NBO participated in the Seniors. South Africa and Egypt qualified in all three groups for the World Championships in Shanghai. There was far more great news for the zone than disappointment, with South Africa (8th) and Egypt (6th) qualifying for the Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup knockouts respectively. Egypt (Nessrine Ezz El Din/Noheir Omar, Nessrine Hamdy/Sophie Sarwat, Lily Khalil/Maud Khouri, npc Mohamed Sorour) bowed out in the quarterfinals, but South Africa (Tim Cope/Glen Holman, Craig Gower/Alon Apteker, Neville Eber/Chris Bosenberg, npc Vernon Rice) shocked the world by upending defending champion Italy by 20 IMPs in the quarterfinals and staying even with USA throughout their semifinal match before falling 8 IMPs short.

The 2009 Zone 8 Playoffs will be played in Sharm El Scheik, Egypt in April.