



FAI Secretary General's report to the 105th General Conference Belgrade, 14-15 October 2011

Mr. President, dear Delegates, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It's a great honor for me today to address you for the first time in my new position as your Secretary General.

Almost 30 years ago, I took my first instruction flight on a Piper Tomahawk in Switzerland. At that time, I was really far from thinking that this first flight would allow me, a few years later, to fly wide-body aircraft around the world with the former Swiss national carrier, and I was even farther from thinking that, today, I would stand in front of you to give you my first report as your Secretary General !

One of the first tasks I achieved during the first days in my new position was to check and sign the Diplomas that had been prepared for the FAI Awards recipients : Reading all these names and achievements convinced me once more that we are still "doing" the aviation history, and that we all belong to a fantastic world and family : Let's keep united, let's work together for the benefit of our common passion for flying and for our Air Sports !

A lot happened during the last few weeks, and I can assure you that, even though I had joined the FAI already 9 ½ years ago, attending and addressing the General Conference just 2 weeks after having taken over my new position has been very challenging.

I hope you will have understanding if this report is somewhat different : No presentation to illustrate my report, no detailed statistics on last year's activities, but just a speech !

I will of course provide you with some data on our membership, competitions and World Records, but I will keep this first part short, and will then focus on what happened at the FAI Headquarters in Lausanne since the last Conference, and how I would like to start my first year in my new position.

FAI Membership

Without counting the decisions the Conference will make later today, the FAI Membership stands at :

83 Active Members (85 last year)
7 Associate Members (6)
10 Temporary Members (12)
3 International Affiliate Members (3)
Total : 103 Members (105)

Competitions

In 2010, 44 First category events (including 24 World Championships) were held in 26 different countries in Europe (20), North America (1), Asia (3) and South America (2). 62 FAI Member countries participated in FAI First category events, with a total of 3460 competitors. Results were provided to the FAI in the best cases on the last day of the competition, in the worst case after ... 79 days, or more than 2 ½ months later!

Fédération
Aéronautique
Internationale

World Records

228 World Records have been ratified in 2010, some 30 % of them being performances achieved by airplanes or helicopters on recognized courses. Amongst the World Records achieved since the last General Conference, I would like to mention:

- The 3 World Records ratified in the solar-powered aircraft category by the Solarimpulse project (Duration : 26h 10m 19s / Gain of height : 8744 m / Absolute altitude : 9235 m)
- The 4 World Records achieved on a piston-engine aircraft designed and built by university students in Brazil.
- The 4 Records Attempts (pending ratification) achieved by a woman pilot in the manpowered rotorcraft category.

These examples show that the dream of flying IS still alive, and that there are still ways for developing new ideas and creating enthusiasm around the passion for flying.

Flight Safety

On a much less positive area, the 41 annual questionnaires received from our national member federations reported a total of 236 fatalities in 2010, compared to 192 in 2009.

Even though flight safety has been addressed for many years, these figures are far too high. Accidents or serious incidents that occurred at recent FAI Championships also showed that, unfortunately, some of our competitors sometimes adopt a dangerous behavior when competing, completely forgetting the consequences accidents can have, not only on human beings or expensive material, but also on the image of our sports : How could potential host cities or sponsors accept being associated with events at which competitors are regularly killed or severely injured ?

FAI Operations

Coming back to the FAI daily operations, the first weeks after the 2010 General Conference started rather smoothly, with a complete and motivated team working in Lausanne after a long understaffed time. Some ambitious projects such as the new website or improved support to event organizers had been launched, or other projects such as the FAI Sporting Licenses Database were close to completion.

Unfortunately, a series of unexpected problems soon emerged, leading to the difficult situation we have been confronted with since a few months :

- Data security issues have been identified a few days before the Sporting Licenses Database should have been opened;
- The ageing Internet server died while the new website infrastructure was not yet in place. In order to re-establish a minimal Internet service within a few weeks, the FAI HQ had to dedicate a lot of resources to transfer what had been saved, from the old system to the new one.
- Communication and coordination problems emerged with some of our Air Sport Commissions, resulting in highly time-consuming „bush-fire fights“, or in numerous attempts to receive the information we needed to do our job.
- Our former Secretary General Stéphane Desprez and our Sport Manager Rodric Neri announced their decision to leave the FAI in September.

While we have been lucky to have Jérôme Krieg with us to achieve his student internship during Ségolène's maternity leave, all these unexpected problems created significant delays on projects such as the new Website. We even had to put some projects on standby (guidelines for event organizers, new expert groups, branding guide, for example).

Today, we are again in an understaffed situation. First steps have been initiated to recruit new manpower for our Sports Department, but we will still need a few weeks, if not months, until new staff members join our team and have been trained to their new job. Together with the Executive Board, projects will be prioritized and resources allocated accordingly.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues in Lausanne for the dedication, time and efforts they have given to the FAI in spite of the turbulent area we are flying through.

This is in this rather difficult situation that I have been appointed your new Secretary General. During the 4-week transition phase with my predecessor, I not only had to take a deeper look in areas where I had not been involved in the past (HR, finance, legal aspects, etc.), but I also had to continue acting in my previous position as Sports Director and, on top of that, to take over the coordination of this General Conference, which would have not been possible without the strong involvement of our host, the Aeronautical Union of Serbia and its Secretary General Zeljko Ovuka.

I therefore ask you for your understanding if, during this Conference, I will not always be able to answer all your questions: I will still need some more time until I feel more comfortable with some of the new aspects of my job.

As I have been working with the FAI for the last 9 ½ years, most of you already know me quite well, know that I like providing good services to our Members and Commissions, that I don't promise things I wouldn't be able to deliver, and that I by far prefer constructive and sound cooperation rather than conflicting situations: I don't see any reason why my attitude would change in my new position.

Changes have been initiated by our Executive Board and my predecessor; I am aware that change is not always easy to accept and implement, but please, let's go ahead, let's try, let's accept that not every change will be perfect from the very first minute!

We all have to accept that the world is changing, and that our sports need to evolve in order to better meet with the expectations of potential hosts. Personally, I am convinced that our air sports can be further developed; I will try to help you bring our sports and federation to new successes, but it will take time, and I will not be able to achieve this alone with my colleagues in Lausanne: We need your support, your constructive thinking, your willingness to explore new paths and to accept reasonable changes that might help our organization become more efficient. As long as we have so complex rules and long decision-making processes, as long as there is no clear willingness to work together towards achieving common goals, as long as our small team in Lausanne has to fight bush-fires, wait for answers or remind deadlines, we won't be in a position to dedicate enough time, energy and resources to further develop our sports. And I can assure you that there is nothing more frustrating than leaving the FAI in the evening with the feeling that you have spent your whole day solving

administrative issues and internal problems, instead of working on developing projects !

COMMUNICATION – COOPERATION – SYNERGIES – COMMON GOALS

These are the four key-words I would like all of us keep in mind for the next months and years.

Let's work together for our common passion for flying, and thank you for your attention.

Jean-Marc BADAN, FAI Secretary General