

REPORT OF FAI PRESIDENT TO 103rd FAI GENERAL CONFERENCE -
INCHEON – 9 OCTOBER 2009

Dear Presidents of Honour
Dear Companions of Honour
Dear Vice-Presidents, Delegates
Ladies and gentlemen,

A warm welcome to all of you for the 103rd General Conference in Korea, at Incheon. I take especial pleasure in welcoming delegates from many Asian nations that have never before attended the FAI General Conference. It is wonderful to see you all here. We are convinced that you hold the key to the future development of air sports in the 21st Century. I hope that you will play an increasing role in our activities in future years.

I also thank the Federation of Korea Aeronautics for kindly hosting us here, and the Conference sponsors for their generosity.

Let me give you a synopsis what happened since our last conference in St Vincent.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Max Bishop will give you more details, but globally 2009 has been a good year for all our sports.

We had 4 board meetings this year, including one here in Incheon, and two telephone conferences and two ASC Presidents meetings

In May we organised for the first time the NAC Presidents meeting decided at last year's Conference, with a good attendance and interesting contributions. The participants expressed the wish to continue, so this meeting will take place again next year if the GC is in favour and if at least 18-20 countries agree to participate.

I travelled quite extensively this year to the USA, Germany, Netherlands, Korea in March and now for the conference, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, Taiwan, Spain, Portugal, Denmark...

A significant number of trips to Lausanne, as well as some meetings in Paris and Brussels (EAS) have to be added.

Close cooperation with the Sec Gen, by mail and phone is daily routine work.

A certain number of Commission meetings and Championships were also on my program.

Max Bishop and I participated in the Sport Accord Forum in Denver which has become one of the most important international sport forums, linked in an ideally convenient way with the general assemblies of the International World Games

Association, the Association of International Sports Federations recognized by the IOC, and last but not least the GAISF General Assembly, the General Association of International Sports Federations, now called "Sport Accord".

We were then again together in Kaohsiung in June for The World Games, where parachuting was one of more than 30 sports represented. It was a very successful event, and we learnt a lot about the management of multi-sport events and the need to balance the requirements of athletes and the public. More about this later.

MSI

I take the opportunity of the General Conference to inform you about a project decided unanimously by the board a few months ago.

In a new step forward for FAI, we shall become the owner of one office floor of 315 m², with parking spaces and storage room, in the 4th building of MSI "La Maison du Sport International", with meeting rooms at our disposal for up to 50 persons.

The company that owns the MSI belongs one third to the canton de Vaud, one third to the city of Lausanne, and one third to the IOC.

The original idea was to build 3 buildings with 4 floors each and to let them to International Sports Federations.

Due to the great success of this project they were able to get more land to build a 4th building. All 4 floors are already sold or rented.

The construction work started 5 weeks ago. Delivery is planned for March 2011.

The total cost of this acquisition is CHF 2 000 000.

The finance plan is for CHF 800 000 to be provided by FAI, and CHF 1 200 000 by a 10 year bank loan, at a fixed interest rate (currently 3.20 %), with 1 % per annum amortisation of the loan.

Total annual costs are identical to the present office rent plus costs.

If we sub-let part of our floor at the beginning,, we shall be under our present expenditure for office accommodation.

The financing of CHF 800 000 will be partially covered by our ROLEX contract of this year, and the rest will be taken from our reserves.

No supplementary funding is needed from now to delivery, which means that the budgets for 2010 and 2011 are not affected, and the board is convinced the new offices will bring us an excellent visibility to the outside world, and proximity to other International Federations on a beautiful site, close to the lake and to the IOC headquarters.

We are now really a force to be reckoned with in the world of sports and have guaranteed part of our reserves in a real estate project in Lausanne, our headquarters.

ROLEX

You all know that one of the main targets of the FAI board is to try hard to find sponsors, to be in a position to reduce or at least not to increase subscription fees.

Since the Krakow conference in 2003 we have been able to freeze subscription fees and give more and better service to our members and commissions.

That was possible thanks to the agreements with RED BULL and ROLEX.

Due to the financial crisis, ROLEX unfortunately did not wish to sign a new contract for 2010.

RED BULL AIR RACE

The contract signed 3 years ago was extended this year to include the FAI sanctioning, as agreed in St Vincent last year. Today, all 6 of this year's races have already successfully taken place.

The cooperation between RBAR and FAI is excellent, for the mutual benefit of both.

As you can see on the RBAR website our logo appears prominently on the Red Bull airport hangar.

This gives us more visibility to the outside world, increasing the popularity of Air Sports.

Alvaro de Orleans Borbon has come here straight from Barcelona where he presented the FAI medals to this year's Red Bull Air Race winners.

WORLD AIR GAMES

The World Air Games took place in Turin from 6-14 June with excellent weather conditions.

It was a difficult pregnancy, but once the baby was born it went quite well.

We had to face two main problems: lack of cooperation inside the LOC and a severe shortfall of money.

The original budget was reduced by one third, therefore no international media and television coverage was provided.

The World Air Games confirmed that the format we decided on works well. Of course we are still learning, and we will apply the lessons learned in future editions.

The FAI Board and the Airsport Commission Presidents are convinced of the value of such an event, that brings all Air Sports together.

We are actively searching for an organiser for 2011, not an easy task in the current world financial and economical crisis.

Our preparations for the 2009 games have clearly confirmed that close cooperation with a professional organization is necessary and that FAI has to keep more control over the organizers through a revised organizer agreement.

We are in the unfortunate situation that the local organising committee did not respect, up to now, the financial obligations of the organiser agreement.

They owe us today US\$ 300 000 and €30 000.

The Committee decided, without any prior consultation, in view of their shortfall in budgeted income not to pay FAI, which the FAI Executive Board considers to be totally unacceptable.

We shall ask delegates during the conference to authorise the board to undertake all actions to oblige the LOC and the Aero Club of Italy to accomplish their obligations.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

As already mentioned the workload in the secretariat continues to increase. Everything is getting more complicated and consumes more time.

The fact that we have more contracts, often contracts with professional organisations, obliges FAI to become more professional too.

All over the world, the shortage of efficient and competent volunteers in Sports is becoming a real problem for all Federations.

That means we have no choice in the future other than to find the funding outside of our member fees to hire people qualified to assist the ASC's, the board and the event organizers, by taking away part of the administrative burden they have to deal with at present.

Only under this condition can we continue to freeze our subscriptions, as we have now done for 7 years.

As you can see on the screen that means we were able to absorb the inflation of around 2 % per annum.

That is another reason to continue to develop our WORLD AIR GAMES. They may become another source of income for our Federation and strongly contribute to our image inside and outside the FAI.

We have seen in Turin and at other events how hard it is to navigate between our need to maintain our traditions and to give satisfaction to event organisers, the public and media people.

Our Air Sport Commissions still have much work to do to make our sports more easily understandable for the general public, and more accessible.

Our competitions often last far too long, and are much too repetitive. This is not only boring for the spectators, but in the present working world, it is no longer easy for ordinary people to take two weeks off – in addition to the family commitments they may have.

We need to keep our traditions and standards for Championships. But we also need to be more inventive and innovative.

The World Air Games concept is the vehicle that allows us to do this. We can continue to develop World Air Games, but if possible also other smaller multi Air Sports events, with a more affordable budget. A few local sponsors can then be found to help to finance the events.

Therefore, I strongly urge our Air Sport Commissions to continue to improve their existing WAG events and to develop new public-friendly events.

There is no doubt in my mind that we have to continue with two different types of event:

Classical Championships, mainly for the competitors, and public-friendly single or multi-sports events, with a maximum duration of 3-5 days, training included.

Our success depends also on good cooperation between the NACs and the different FAI Air Sport Commissions.

I appeal to our NACs to give good and strong support to our Airsport Commissions. When an international Championship is held in your country I ask you please to give full support to the organisers. Even though the NAC may not be the organising entity, we expect NACs to feel responsible for international events that take place on their soil.

Only if we all pull together can we be successful in ensuring the future of our Air Sports.

You will have seen on your agenda a proposal from Spain to add a fourth 2-year term to the maximum number of years a FAI President may serve. I can assure you that I was not in any way involved in the discussions that led to the proposal being made. I simply accepted that it go on the agenda and referred it to the Statutes Working Group. Several people have already asked me whether I would seek a fourth term next year if this amendment to Statutes were to be adopted. I cannot firmly answer that question now. Health and other circumstances need to be taken into account. However, if it is the Conference's wish for me to continue longer, I would certainly give this serious thought.

You all know that Max Bishop announced officially during the NAC Presidents meeting in May his decision to retire at the end of January 2010.

I was personally informed in January 2009 of his decision. You all realize that this Conference is his last General Conference as secretary general. I am sure this is a moment of emotion for Max and all of us.

Since 1993 he did outstanding work for our Federation.

I had the chance to closely work with him since October 2000 when I become FAI's financial director.

We had a great time working together and were almost always on the same wave length, with the same approach and vision on all important subjects.

Max Bishop belongs to this small world of people, accepted and complimented by everybody. You never hear criticisms, he is unanimously respected.

We have now the obligation to find a valuable successor and make out of this unfortunate situation something positive for FAI.

The show must go on without Max. The search started in May and we hope to appoint his successor soon after this Conference.

The good thing is that he will stay in Lausanne and may be prepared to help us in special circumstances.

I thank Max for his kindness, his availability, his professionalism.
Thank you Max.

Let me express my thanks to my colleagues of the board, to the Commission Presidents and to you, dear delegates, and last but not least to our staff in Lausanne.

Let us continue to work together to have the Air Sport persons flying, Championships taking place, new World Records to be accomplished and to do our best that this wonderful Federation still exists in the 22nd century.

Now, dear delegates, ladies and gentlemen, let us have a good and efficient general conference, at Incheon.

Thank you for your attention.