



*Fédération  
Aéronautique  
Internationale*

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# About FAI

## Introduction to the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale

**FAI – The World Air Sports Federation**

March 2009

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**FAI Centenary 1905-2005**

**Role / Rôle**  
 The role of the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale is to promote the world wide expansion and practice of aeronautics and astronautics, ensuring that these activities contribute to the development of an international spirit of peace, friendship and fair competition amongst the peoples of the world.  
 Le rôle de la Fédération Aéronautique Internationale consiste à promouvoir le développement de l'aéronautique et de l'astronautique dans le monde, en faisant ainsi valoir à ce que ces activités contribuent au développement de la paix, de l'amitié et d'un esprit de compétition loyal entre les peuples du monde.

**Key figures / Chiffres-clé**  
 12'000+ World records ratified since 1906  
 Records du monde homologués depuis 1906  
 2'000+ Athletes of all ages competing internationally each year  
 Compétiteurs internationaux de tout âge concourant chaque année  
 90+ FAI represented in over 90 nations  
 Présence de la FAI dans plus de 90 nations  
 20+ FAI World and Continental Championships each year  
 Championnats du monde et continentaux FAI chaque année  
 15 International Air Sport and Technical Commissions  
 Commissions internationales sportives et techniques  
 10 Air Sports governed by FAI  
 Sports aériens gérés par la FAI  
 1 Shared value: The Passion for Flight  
 Valeur commune: la Passion du vol

**Milestones / Dates-clé**  
 1905 Foundation of FAI on October 14th in Paris  
 Fondation de la FAI le 14 octobre à Paris  
 1906 Realisation of the first FAI World Record (A. Santos-Dumont)  
 Réalisation du premier record du monde FAI (A. Santos-Dumont)  
 1906 First competition: The Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett, Paris (ballooning)  
 Première compétition: La Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett, Paris  
 1925 First FAI Gold Air Medal awarded to General Francesco de Pinedo  
 Première Médaille d'Or de l'Air FAI remise au Général Francesco de Pinedo  
 1936 The International Olympic Committee adopted gliding for the Program of the Helsinki Olympic Games 1952 / Le Comité international olympique ajoute le vol à voile au programme des Jeux olympiques d'été de 1952  
 1959 More than 50 nations are members of FAI  
 La FAI compte plus de 50 pays membres  
 1965 IOC Recognition of FAI for gliding, hang gliding/paragliding and parachuting  
 La FAI est reconnue par le CIO (vol à voile, vol libre, parascolisme)  
 1997 1st FAI World Air Games, Turkey  
 1ers Jeux Mondiaux de l'Air FAI en Turquie  
 1997 First participation of sport parachuting/skydiving in the World Games, Lahti  
 Première participation du parachutisme aux Jeux Mondiaux de Lahti  
 1998 FAI Headquarters moved to Lusarne, the Olympic Capital  
 Le siège de la FAI s'installe à Lusarne, Capitale olympique  
 2004 FAI is represented in 90+ nations, on all 5 continents  
 La FAI est présente dans plus de 90 nations sur les 5 continents  
 2005 FAI 1905 - 2005: A Century of Sporting Achievement in the Air  
 FAI 1905 - 2005: un siècle d'exploits aéronautiques

**Air Sport Commissions / Commissions sportives**

**Technical Commissions / Commissions techniques**

**The Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, FAI - The World Air Sports Federation, was founded in 1905. It is a non-governmental and non-profit making international organisation with the basic aim of furthering aeronautical and astronautical activities worldwide, ratifying world records and coordinating the organization of international competitions. After a century of steady growth, FAI is now an organisation of some 100 member countries, forming a strong network linking all those who participate in air sports worldwide**

### Introduction to the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale

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#### **1. The Origins**

At the start of the 20th Century, the pioneering flights of pilots such as Clement Ader, the Wright Brothers and Santos-Dumont, the proliferation of aeronautical competitions, and increasingly rapid technological advances marked the real birth of the modern aviation era.

A small group of visionary men recognized the need for an international federation to coordinate and give direction to the rapidly growing aeronautical activity.

On 10 June 1905, Count Henry de la Vaulx, Vice-President of the Aero-Club de France, Major Moedebeck of the German Airship League and Fernand Jacobs, President of the Aero-Club of Belgium, gave a presentation to the Olympic Congress of Brussels on their proposal for a « Fédération Aéronautique Internationale ». The Delegates received the idea warmly, and to demonstrate its support, the Olympic Congress adopted the following resolution : *“This Congress, recognizing the special importance of aeronautics, expresses the desire that in each country, there be created an Association for regulating the sport of flying and thereafter there be formed a Universal Air Sports Federation to regulate the various aviation meetings and advance the science and sport of Aeronautics”*.

On 12 October 1905, an international aeronautical conference was convened in Paris. After two days of debate, the representatives of Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United States adopted the entire package of proposed Statutes. The Fédération Aéronautique Internationale was founded on 14 October 1905. From its inception, the FAI defined its principal aims as being to *“methodically catalogue the best performances achieved, so that they be known to everybody; to identify their distinguishing features so as to permit comparisons to be made; and to verify evidence and thus ensure that record-holders have undisputed claims to their titles.”*

A century later, in spite of the emergence of new technologies and of several air sport disciplines, the objectives of the FAI as expressed in its Statutes have essentially remained the same. Today, FAI's Statutes describe its aims and objectives as follows :

- *To make evident the essentially international spirit of aeronautics as a powerful instrument for bringing all people closer in mutual understanding and friendship regardless of political, racial or religious considerations, thereby helping to create international good will and thus build a better and more peaceful world.*
- *To promote physical and moral qualities, technical knowledge and skill as basic to aeronautical activities and air sports.*
- *To bring together the air sports men and women of the world in international competition.*
- *To educate young people through sport in the spirit of mutual understanding and friendship.*
- *To co-ordinate its Members' separate efforts to further aeronautics and astronautics throughout the world.*
- *To ensure adequate access to airspace for all who wish to fly.*
- *To provide a forum for the exchange of information and discussion of mutual problems with other elements of civil aeronautics.*

## 2. Organization

To fulfil its objectives and meet the evolving needs of each air sport and area of activity, the FAI has constantly adjusted its organisational structure. Today, the FAI comprises the following elements :

- The General Conference, the supreme policy-making body, defines the aims of FAI, determines its Statutes and By-Laws, and elects the President and the Executive Board. The General Conference convenes once a year.
- The Executive Board is the principal executive body of FAI, responsible for implementing the policies and decisions made by the General Conference.
- The Air Sport Commissions control the activities of the different disciplines governed by FAI : Ballooning, General Aviation, Gliding, Rotorcraft, Parachuting, Aeromodelling, Aerobatics, Hang Gliding & Paragliding, Microlights and Astronautical Records (see paragraph 7a below).
- The Technical Commissions control non-sporting activities such as aviation and space education, amateur-built aircraft, aviation medicine, environmental, navigation and air space matters (see paragraph 7b below).

The member nations of FAI are represented by their “National Air Sport Controls” (NACs). At the General Conference, voting powers are held by FAI Active Members and by the Air Sport Commissions.

The FAI Secretariat is managed by the Secretary General, who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the federation. In 1998, after 93 years in Paris, the FAI moved its headquarters and Secretariat to Lausanne, the Olympic Capital.

### **3. Championships & World Air Games**

The awarding and supervision of international competitions is one of the main tasks of FAI. The rules – the Sporting Codes – drawn up by the Air Sport Commissions are used by national members to organize numerous competitions each year. World championships are generally held every two years, alternately with continental championships. Every year, over 30 world or continental championships are listed on the FAI Sporting Calendar (<http://events.fai.org/>), and many other sporting events such as Grand Prix, Cups and miscellaneous international competitions are organized in accordance with FAI Sporting Codes.

The first World Air Games took place in 1997 in Turkey and, starting in 2009, this multi-disciplinary event will be held every two years. The World Air Games is the only competition that brings together the various air sports. It is a combination of elite competition and spectacular demonstrations, and has been developed to become FAI's flagship event at which top athletes are invited to compete for the title of "World Air Games Champions" – the Champions of the Champions. The next World Air Games will be held in June 2009 in Turin, Italy ([www.worldairgames.org](http://www.worldairgames.org)).

### **4. World Records**

Since the beginning of aviation, pilots have always tried to surpass themselves, to fly further, faster and higher. A pilot often needed great determination and courage just to take-off, let alone to put his aircraft through its full paces and try to push back the frontiers of the possible. Even today, adventurers such as non-stop round-the-world balloonists Bertrand Piccard or Steve Fossett often still venture into uncharted territory.

New technology enables constant progression in aviation records, and generates useful spin-off applications: for example, the pressurized cabin invented by Professor Auguste Piccard to carry out the first flight in the stratosphere in 1931 – a world altitude record – today allows millions of passengers to travel comfortably on board aircraft that fly at the outer edge of the atmosphere.

Drawing up rules, and controlling and ratifying aeronautical and astronautical World Records still represent an important part of FAI activities. Since the first flights were recorded in 1906, some 16'000 World Records have been registered by FAI to date. Every year, FAI receives between 200 and 300 world record claims, and approximately 90 % of these attempts are ratified as new world records.

Charles Lindbergh's historical flight across the Atlantic Ocean, and Yuri Gagarin's first human flight into space are amongst the great aeronautical and astronautical achievements recorded by FAI. All air sport disciplines are represented in the FAI World Record Archives, from human-powered flight at one extreme, to space flight at the other ([www.fai.org/records/](http://www.fai.org/records/)).

### **5. Education**

Fifty years ago, the FAI established an Aviation & Space Education Commission to raise public awareness and understanding of air and space activities, especially amongst young people. Conscious that young people represent the future of aviation and air sports, the Commission developed several programs aimed at explaining flight, and raising the interest of young people in the highly demanding and motivating air sports and aviation careers.

Experience shows that teachers and pupils have a latent interest in aeronautics. When correctly integrated into traditional school programs, themes relating to aviation and space add a new dimension to the teaching of history, geography and physics. The educational material made available helps teachers to create a stimulating and motivating environment for their pupils. FAI also runs an annual Young Artists Contest and the "FAI Recommended Museum" scheme ([www.fai.org/education/](http://www.fai.org/education/)).

### **6. Awards**

Prestigious medals and diplomas allow FAI to give public recognition to those who have made outstanding contributions to aeronautics and astronautics, especially in the field of sporting aviation. Many of the recipients honoured by FAI have had their names closely associated with the history and developments of aeronautics and astronautics ([www.fai.org/awards/](http://www.fai.org/awards/)).

## 7. International Commissions & Air Sports

### a) Air Sport Commissions

Competitions and related activities are administered and developed by the FAI's Air Sport Commissions :

- The FAI Air Sport General Commission (CASI) seeks to further the development of air sports and keeps current the General Section of the FAI Sporting Code.
- FAI Ballooning Commission (CIA) : [www.fai.org/ballooning/](http://www.fai.org/ballooning/)
- FAI General Aviation Commission (GAC) : [www.fai.org/general\\_aviation/](http://www.fai.org/general_aviation/)
- FAI Gliding Commission (IGC) : [www.fai.org/gliding/](http://www.fai.org/gliding/)
- FAI Rotorcraft Commission (CIG) : [www.fai.org/rotorcraft/](http://www.fai.org/rotorcraft/)
- FAI Parachuting Commission (IPC) : [www.fai.org/parachuting/](http://www.fai.org/parachuting/)
- FAI Aeromodelling Commission (CIAM) : [www.fai.org/aeromodelling/](http://www.fai.org/aeromodelling/)
- FAI Aerobatics Commission (CIVA) : [www.fai.org/aerobatics/](http://www.fai.org/aerobatics/)
- FAI Astronautic Records Commission (ICARE) : [www.fai.org/astronautics/](http://www.fai.org/astronautics/)
- FAI Hang Gliding & Paragliding (CIVL) : [www.fai.org/hang\\_gliding/](http://www.fai.org/hang_gliding/)
- FAI Microlight Commission (CIMA) : [www.fai.org/microlight/](http://www.fai.org/microlight/)

### b) Technical Commissions :

- FAI Aviation & Space Education Commission (CIEA) : see paragraph 5 above. ([www.fai.org/education/](http://www.fai.org/education/)).
- The FAI Amateur-Built & Experimental Commission (CIACA) promotes the design, construction, restoration and use of amateur-built and experimental aircraft and vintage collector's pieces. ([www.fai.org/homebuilt/](http://www.fai.org/homebuilt/))
- The FAI Medico-Physiological Commission (CIMP) studies all medical and physiological factors influencing human performance and behaviour in air sports. ([www.fai.org/medical/](http://www.fai.org/medical/)).
- The FAI Environmental Commission (EnvC) Provides information on the environmental impact of aviation on nature, and establishes codes of conduct for practising air sports disciplines while respecting the natural environment ([www.fai.org/environment/](http://www.fai.org/environment/)).
- The FAI Commission on Airspace and Navigation Systems (CANS) Co-ordinates and disseminates knowledge and information regarding airspace regulation and navigations systems which may impact on air sports. ([www.fai.org/airspace\\_navigation/](http://www.fai.org/airspace_navigation/)).

## 8. FAI in the World Community

Represented at the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), FAI takes an active part in the decision-making process relating to flight safety, pilot training and licensing, and air space regulations.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) recognised the FAI as an Olympic federation in 1985, and three disciplines – gliding, parachuting and hang gliding/paragliding – are potential Olympic sports.

The FAI is a member of the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF), of the Association of IOC Recognized International Sports Federations (ARISF), and of the International World Games Association (IWGA). Since 1997, sport parachuting has been part of the official program of the IWGA World Games ([www.worldgames-iwga.org](http://www.worldgames-iwga.org)).

## 9. FAI in the 21st Century

Just like their predecessors who, at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century, envisioned the huge potential of aeronautics and founded the FAI, today's decision-makers are already planning how FAI will face 21<sup>st</sup> Century trends and challenges.

At the start of this new century, one of FAI's main priorities is to encourage new recruits to take up air sports, and to improve the visibility and attractiveness of these sports to the media, the general public and young people. Among FAI's long-term projects are the exploitation of FAI's aeronautical heritage and fund

of expertise, the further development of the World Air Games concept, and the encouragement of new technologies.

The FAI celebrated its first century of existence in 2005. On this occasion, FAI published "High Flyers, A Century of Sporting Achievement in the Air", the first book covering the history and development of FAI and of Air Sports in general. The FAI Centenary celebrations were of course also an excellent opportunity to look to the future and plan how to open the skies to all those who dream of flying ([www.fai.org/centenary/](http://www.fai.org/centenary/)).

## 10. To learn more about ...

... FAI activities : Please consult the various Internet links provided throughout this document, as well as those listed below :

- News : [www.fai.org](http://www.fai.org)
- Statutes : [www.fai.org/documents/constitution](http://www.fai.org/documents/constitution)
- Sporting Codes : [www.fai.org/documents/sportingcode](http://www.fai.org/documents/sportingcode)
- National Member organisations : [www.fai.org/fai\\_members/](http://www.fai.org/fai_members/)
- Air Sports : [www.fai.org/about/commissions](http://www.fai.org/about/commissions)
- Competitions (Sporting Calendar & Results) : <http://events.fai.org/>
- World Air Games : [www.worldairgames.org/](http://www.worldairgames.org/)
- World Records : [www.fai.org/records/](http://www.fai.org/records/)
- FAI Awards : [www.fai.org/awards/](http://www.fai.org/awards/)
- Young Artists Contest : [www.fai.org/education/contests/artists/](http://www.fai.org/education/contests/artists/)
- FAI Centenary 2005 : [www.fai.org/centenary/](http://www.fai.org/centenary/)
- « High Flyers, A Century of Sporting Achievement in the Air » : [www.fai.org/centenary/highflyers](http://www.fai.org/centenary/highflyers)
- FAI eSHOP : <http://shop.fai.org>

... flying : Please contact the national organisation representing FAI in your country. The complete list of FAI Members is available at [www.fai.org/fai\\_members/](http://www.fai.org/fai_members/).

We thank you for your interest in air sports and invite you to discover the camaraderie, enthusiasm and passion of all those in FAI and its member organizations, who form the international air sports community.

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Lausanne, March 2009