



ANNEXE 12B – A FUTURE FOR THE WORLD AIR GAMES? V2

After the 2022 World Air Games were cancelled (see Annexe 12b), the FAI President, Bob Henderson, took the initiative to discuss the matter with the Commission President. He wrote:

This (Basecamp working) group should include all Commission Presidents and Executive Board members Agust, Alvaro, Mary Anne and Marina. This debate started in Lausanne in December and I would like to start it here by asking that the future shape and style of the FAI World Air Games be considered with the objectives of deciding:

- (a) the aim of the event;
- (b) what sport disciplines participate;
- (c) the style (size, proximity of disciplines, number of participants); and
- (d) the financing of the event.

I would like to ask that this group chose a chairperson from amongst your numbers to manage the discussions.

CIVL President commented

I am not sure that we need a president for now. We can define together the issues and discuss them freely. Then if the need for a president emerges, we can choose one.

I see 2 issues for now:

- The way Bob is introducing our work, it seems that doing WAG again is a done deal. This is not at all the feeling I had from our pre-General Conference meetings. Some of us don't want WAG anymore. A waste of time and energy that has been hurting the sport more than anything. I am surprised by the enthusiasm of the Executive Board to go this way again, after the resounding failure of the Turkey Executive Board project. So do we want the WAGs, really? Do they serve the sport? The answer to these questions will take some time. Each Commission plenary should be consulted.
- In order to answer, we need a proper evaluation of the two recent WAG: Dubai and Turkey. What did they bring? How much did they cost? The financial aspect is crucial. When we asked numbers during our pre-General Conference meetings, we got different answers, from we don't know to 1.5 million profit. But said profit did not take into account the paid work done by the secretariat, so it was a worthless answer.

So I suggest starting this project with a full review of Dubai and Turkey, and especially of their budgets and involvement of the EB and Secretariat members.

Other Commission Presidents commented

- I am in line with CIVL, we need a real in-depth, honest analysis of what the WAG have done for FAI as a whole, for each Commission and for the different organisers. If the data is accessible, we should look at all four versions plus the aborted latest version.

The previous comments reflect well the general feeling within our Commission that the WAG do not have the sporting value for our athletes that our Cat 1 events do and the overall visibility of the different versions of the WAG have been very limited too. From our perspective, I can see no evidence that any of the WAGs have had any impact in terms of increasing participants in our discipline and regarding Dubai, there is the general feeling that the WAG actually killed the golden goose as some activities have been significantly reduced there since 2015.

If there is evidence that there is real value in continuing to pursue the idea then, obviously, we will find a way of participating. I will ask for feedback from our Plenary.

At this very moment, I also agree that the chairman is not needed. This can be discussed only if we decide that we need to go ahead and think something for the future.

If we continue, we need clear rules for all so that everyone knows where they stand. No negotiating for one sport over another, no unrealistic expectations from our officials, no hidden costs for the organiser and transparent use of sanction fees by FAI. And that is just as a starting point.

- Dubai was referred as perhaps being the most successful WAG (see Annexe 12a), but if you look at the fallout in the country I would not agree. We went back in 2017. The resentment against FAI was palpable. The high-ranking officials that we had been working with since 2009 clearly stated that their hospitality had been abused and the price, even for them, was high, and not only financially. Attempts to continue with the (competition centre) were unsuccessful due to no longer having the support of the government and royal family.

- I completely agree with your statement about the hard feelings from the organisers' side and since I had been there afterwards and have the opportunity to discuss the case with them, I know that their disappointment is mainly not from the event itself but from the behaviour of some high-ranked FAI officials. Unfortunately, the Dubai event generated the ambition of the FAI central events with the known results. We don't have to refer more on them.

- On a final note about Dubai, the event did show us how the WAG could be successful if there was the financial backing and we all pulled together, which we did try to do. It was also positive for the national delegations who enjoyed being together.

- We might be able to save something of the concept, but we might need to relabel the event. World Air Games do not have the aura it might have had when it started. World Air Festival by FAI or something like that could be inspiring and might be better since short (competitive) demonstration events seem preferable over our usual 'Games'. But we have a long way to go before choosing a name.

- If we want to think for something in the future, we need to have in mind the conclusions of the workshop. The outcome of the workshop was very positive. We were focussed on what the event should look like and based on the experience in Dubai, we had a very good vision.