



FAI Microlight and Paramotor Commission (CIMA)

Report to the 106th FAI General Conference

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Fédération
Aéronautique
Internationale

1. Sporting Activity and Competition Review

World Championships

Spain hosted the 2012 World Microlight Championships in early August at Marugán not far to the west of Madrid, and then did it again by hosting the World Paramotor Championships in the same location in late August.

The general consensus of participants in both events was that they were possibly one of the best World Championships ever. Enormous credit must go to both organizing teams for achieving this, especially in the prevailing economic climate which made it nearly impossible to attract any commercial or local government support and forced them to run both championships almost exclusively on funds received in entry fees which usually isn't considered enough.

WPC had 119 pilots in 101 aircraft from 17 nations. Paramotors are relatively easy to travel with and participant numbers at WPCs are still growing; this year it included competitors for the first time from India and Malaysia.

WMC was well attended with 91 pilots in 49 aircraft from 12 nations but it is much more expensive to move microlights around and it has become very rare to have participants from outside Europe; this year there were none. This also implies that we will not be able to sanction a World Microlight Championships outside Europe in the foreseeable future. The single seat microlight classes are also becoming increasingly problematic, especially the 'aerodynamically controlled' AL1 class which again failed to reach a quorum despite the organizers making a special offer on entry fees for them.

However, this year also saw the introduction of the Microlight Autogyro classes in WMC which gave Autogyro pilots their first ever opportunity to compete for FAI medals. The consensus of organizers, officials and pilots was that this was a success; they flew all the same tasks as the other classes and generally integrated very well into the event with no need for any special arrangements to be made.

January 2012 saw the introduction of a new and much more transparent system of charging sanction fees in Category 1 championships. Previously it was a proportion of the entry fee charged by the organizer, but once early payment and other discounts were included this became difficult to calculate. The new system is a simple flat fee of €29 per pilot, co-pilot or team leader and does not include the cost of FAI medals which must be paid for separately by the event organizer.

Asian Beach Games

The 3rd Asian Beach Games (ABG) was held in Haiyang (CHN) from 16 to 22 June 2012. This was the first foray by CIMA into the world of multi-sport games with the Paramotor event, which was considered to have Category 1 status.

ABGs occur bi-annually and are regulated by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) which currently has a membership of 45 National Olympic Committees (NOC). FAI is recognized by the IOC and hence OCA as the World governing body for all air sports and was therefore invited to provide the rules and technical assistance. CIMA provided a Technical Delegate and an International Jury, the Air Sports Federation of China (ASFC) provided the rest of the competition staff. All official's expenses were paid by the local organizer, there were no entry fees so athletes only had to fund their travel and \$50 per day for accommodation and food in the athletes village.

There were certainly some challenges in the lead-up to the games, not least the fact that only NOCs can enter athletes into an ABG. While it was mandatory for all athletes to have a FAI

Sporting Licence, it was often difficult, in some cases very difficult, to get a line of communication going between NOCs and their corresponding FAI NACs who could arrange this. There are also some OCA member nations who have no corresponding NAC. Athletes from these nations had every right to enter ABG, but no means of obtaining a Sporting Licence, so FAI Executive Board had to create a way for those athletes to be issued with a temporary Sporting Licence lasting for the duration of the games. Whilst 2 nations without NACs did enter, in fact they did not turn up, so ultimately this special arrangement did not have to be invoked.

The Games were generally considered a great success. There were well over 1000 athletes in the 13 different sports, 30 pilots from 7 nations competed in the 5 day Paramotor event. Special credit must go to ASFC who made a really splendid job of running everything at the venue.

Also of note was the scoring system we developed over the winter with Swiss Timing, part of the Swatch Group, who were contracted to do the scoring in all ABG events. It was the first time we have had the opportunity to use a genuinely 'instant' system which displayed on large screens a pilot's performance the moment they passed the finish line and could simultaneously insert appropriate captions into live TV feeds Etc. This made the whole thing much more interesting to spectators, especially in the last task where it came down to the last person who landed won a gold medal. The key to their system was the data-capture element of it, but unfortunately this was a relatively small add-on to their very expensive and bespoke integrated system and would not be suitable for use in our other championships. But it made such a big difference to the whole ambience of the event it is something CIMA will definitely be investigating for use in future championships. Thailand did very well at ABG, winning 8 of the 12 available medals.

World league cup

CIMA introduced this new concept at its 2010 Plenary on a continental basis, initially just for Paramotors. The objective is to encourage pilots to travel more between open national events by linking up their results, and simultaneously to create a new line of income for CIMA from a small sanction fee.

The concept was undersubscribed in the 2011 season but the CIMA plenary decided it was promising enough to continue in 2012, still just for Paramotors, but on a World basis. This has generated a small increase in interest, with 163 pilots from 22 nations participating in 6 events thus far, two of them in Asia. After more than a year's delay FAI Secretariat has at last implemented a rudimentary method of online payment of sanction fees but until there is a FAI database to cross-check with, we have no effective method of checking SL validity and it is very laborious to check for 'unique people', especially from Asian nations who regularly translate names from their character set into a phonetic ascii one differently every time.

Future championships

Bids for future championships are in a healthier state than they have been for some time and it is to be hoped the success of the WMC and WMC this year will encourage more NACs to bid for championships in future.

CIMA sanctions Continental and World championships in alternate years, 2013 is a year for Continental championships. The current program has the 2013 European Paramotor championships in Estonia, the European Microlight championships as a joint venture between the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and for the first time an Asia / Oceania championships in Thailand. At one point we also had a bid for the first pan-American Paramotor championships in Brazil, but this appears to have fallen foul of internal NAC politics and has apparently been abandoned.

We also have a reasonable selection of bids for both Microlight and Paramotor World championships in 2014, the final choices will be made at the forthcoming CIMA plenary in November. It also seems likely we will be participating again in the 2014 Asian Beach Games, this time in Phuket, Thailand. That decision should be made in November at the OCA conference in Macau.

At this time there are no bids for continental championships in 2015 and we have no news about a possible WAG.

2. Records

Pilots continue to claim records in both Microlights and Paramotors, there are usually about 25 successful claims each year and it looks like 2012 will be no different. We still have some outstanding issues with FAI record data; this improved after a request by CIMA in 2009 but has reverted to the original since the 'new' website was introduced.

3. Awards

CIMA applied for a change to FAI Bylaws which was granted at the August 2012 EB meeting. The request was to change the timing associated with the Colibri Diploma, which is an FAI award in the gift of CIMA. Because the CIMA Plenary is not long after the General Conference the old rules created an extended delay between when someone did something meriting the award, for example a remarkable flight, and when the diploma could actually be presented. The new wording potentially reduces the delay to a little over one year, which is an improvement.

4. Finance

At the beginning of 2012 CIMA's accounting currency changed from the CHF to the Euro, this was primarily to avoid conversion losses from currency it most commonly receives in income. Compared to some other commissions, CIMA's reserves are very modest. As reported last year, 2011 was an exceptionally bad year with no Category 1 events at all, hence no sanction fee income. 2012 should show a positive balance as a result of the good participation in the events in Spain, and to a small extent the WLC.

The one outstanding issue is ABG. Since this is an OCA event, FAI is there solely as an advisor in its capacity as the 'International Federation' (IF), a 'sanction fee' in the traditional sense cannot be imposed even though we consider it a Cat. 1 event and we put a lot of work into it.

FAI members in Asia attach great value to participating in ABG, their sports ministries see it as a far more important event than we can achieve with a World Championships, so to some extent they see FAI's participation as getting something in return for their FAI subscription, but of course as a commission we see none of that. OCA is organized on identical lines to IOC and certainly the IFs in IOC events receive a handsome income for their work, but thus far it is unknown if OCA can or will be paying anything to FAI. We have requested Secretariat tries to find out. This is especially important if we are to participate in future games of this kind.

5. Relations with 'FAI Central'

It was obviously a big job for the new Secretary General and secretariat staff to catch up after a catastrophic two years, but with the help of the new staff recruited in the last year they do seem to be slowly getting back to where they should be. However I am convinced this could be a lot faster if they did not appear so bound by antique working practices and have such a reluctance to consider alternative ways of doing things which weren't quite so time consuming. A typical example is the official results of competitions. These days the results of CIMA sanctioned events invariably get published as soon as possible on the official competition website, CIMA has made a rule that those results are deemed to be signed by the competition director, yet Secretariat still demand printed signed copies to be sent to them by fax or post before they'll recognize them. In an age when people require instant results this is not exactly a speedy way of going about things, and presumably requires quite a lot of re-typing of the information too. Same applies to record claims; these days most of the evidence is supplied in some type of electronic format, and there seems no reason why this can't include scans of the claim forms too, but Secretariat still insist on paper copies being sent by post.

Whilst the idea of the new FAME sa is not a bad one, it is difficult to see how such an essentially bureaucratic institution could possibly make a success of it when it struggles to even create a decent online payments system to collect our sanction fees and has consistently failed with key systems like the SL database. Nevertheless we live in hope that something good can come of it.

CIMA also welcomes FAI's new association with Breitling, but in the 5 months since the agreement was signed we have seen little more than Breitling logos appearing on the FAI website and at the foot of some emails sent by secretariat staff, which does not seem like much, and no commercial sponsor will last long if it does not see anything in return. We have yet to see what commissions will be asked to do in this context, but it seem likely it will not be done well unless they see some sort of tangible benefit in return.

The disappearance of that dreadful global media deal has sparked some interest from our future competition organizers to get media organizations interested in our activities. Secretariat's approach to their enquiries has thus far been refreshingly constructive.

It is good to see the new IT and NT expert groups have at last been created. Not much seems to have happened thus far, and there is a lot to do, but it is progress of a sort, and still early days. The most outstanding issues for the IT group seems to be the creation of a database of unique people which can be linked to SLs, logins for document retrieval and edit permissions, competition results, rankings, records, biographical data etc. which would certainly be extremely useful to CIMA and ultimately permit FAI to add a lot of value to the data it holds. For the NT group, most commissions, including CIMA, seem to be working independently on GPS logging and tracking systems which must incur a lot of unnecessary duplication and incompatibility. A primary objective would seem to be to inject some level of coordination between them.

The 2011 CIMA annual report concluded: "*It is within the power of the new Secretary General to re-establish sensible two-way communication and cooperation with the 'engine room of the FAI'. It can only be hoped he will.*"

While there is still an inclination within secretariat to be a 'head office' which issues orders in a corporate manner, there is no doubt communication and cooperation with CIMA has improved in the last year. Long may that continue.

6. Positive and negative results:

N/A

7. Main problem(s) encountered and solutions adopted :

N/A

8. Planned activities and projects for next year :

N/A

9. Proposals (if any) to FAI Executive Board, FAI Head Office or for the next General Conference :

N/A

10. Free reporting:

N/A