



**FAI President's report to the 108th General Conference
Pattaya, Thailand, 18-19 October 2014**

Your Royal Highness, Your Excellences, Dear FAI Companions of Honour, Dear Regional Vice Presidents, Commission Presidents and Expert Group Charimen, Dear Delegates and Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to present the President's report for the FAI year of 2013-2014. Of course it is impossible to cover all aspects of what's going on in our 108 year young Federation – you also have the other various reports in this Conference. Here is a report from my perspective.

You will recall the excellent General Conference we enjoyed in Kuala Lumpur last year. I take this opportunity to again thank the Malaysian Sport Aviation Federation and its President Tengku Abdillah for the excellent arrangements.

At that Conference there were a number of important decisions made and instructions given to the Executive Board.

I would like to start with the process of finding a new Secretary General and a new Sport Director. This process was explained at the previous Conference, and I am pleased to inform you that the structured approach suggested by Executive Director Beat Neuenschwander worked very well without the need of hiring an external consultant with the accompanying costs. We had 22 applications, all very qualified, and after an initial review, we finally interviewed four candidates. We were very pleased when Susanne Schödel accepted the post, and we are extremely pleased to see how quickly she has understood and approached the many challenges. Please all welcome our new Secretary General Susanne Schödel, who is, amongst many other qualifications a World Record holder and World Champion of Gliding! I am sure you will listen closely to her report in a while!

I take this opportunity to send you all the best greetings from our former Secretary General Jean-Marc Badan. I reiterate the gratitude we communicated to him already at the Conference in Kuala Lumpur. You might recall we all gave him a gas balloon flight as a farewell gift, and I can now report this was carried out not so long ago, a most wonderful flight over his home country Switzerland and safely landing in an orchard in Germany. I thank the CIACA President Alfons Hubmann for arranging this, and at our own expense we both took the opportunity of joining Jean-Marc onboard. An amazing experience!

Early in the year our Sport Director Rob Hughes decided to formally step down, a decision he had informed me of long before this, and I thank him warmly for staying on until our new Secretary General finally was in place. Rob Hughes moved back to England with his wife and is now involved in other sport arrangements. His contribution to FAI under difficult and strenuous times will not be forgotten.

*Fédération
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One of the first jobs for our new Secretary General was to find somebody after Rob Hughes, and quite quickly we had Markus Haggeneby onboard – another air sport enthusiast very well established in FAI procedures. He is now our Sport & Marketing Director – please give him a warm hand of welcome to his first General Conference! As I am sure you are aware, he has a number of important issues in his lap, apart from marketing issues, including the Dubai 2015 World Air Games.

So our Head Office has new management, and I must say this has been a real injection of vitamins spreading positive enthusiasm throughout the office. There is considerable progress at HO; the IT development is just one example. I take this opportunity of thanking our loyal staff members who of course were in a difficult situation after both Jean-Marc Badan and Rob Hughes had announced they were stepping down. Please welcome Faustine Carrera, FAI Communication Manager, and Annick Hauser, FAI Assistant Sport Manager who both are here at their first General Conference, as well as Visa-Matti Leinikki, our IT Manager.

The Executive Board has consisted of my Deputy Alvaro De Orleans Borbon (Spain), Finance Director Bob Clipsham (Canada), and Directors Frits Brink (Netherlands), Bob Henderson (New Zealand), Otto Lagarhus (Norway) and Beat Neuenschwander (Switzerland). May I say they have done and are doing a wonderful job. As you might know, we work with portfolios and have thus distributed areas of primary responsibility amongst each other. The portfolios are as follows:

AOB: Deputy to FAI President, Assistance with Strategy paper and ASC Autonomy, IPETA Director

FB: Selection of Secretary General, Fundraising, Expert System: TC's Environment and Education, Statutes Working Group, RVP Africa & Middle East, relations with International Sports organisations

RC: Finance

RH: Anti-Doping, sponsorship, sports strategy, CIMP relations, FAME Chairman

OL: Regional Management System, Expert System: EG's: Regulation and Safety, Strategy paper, ASC Autonomy and IPETA Director.

BN: Selection of Secretary General, Development Expert System, Expert Groups Airspace and Navigation, HO top-management support

As you know, Otto Lagarhus and Beat Neuenschwander are now stepping down after four years on the Executive Board. Their work has been invaluable and they have contributed greatly to the team spirit of the Board. I thank them warmly and know that they will continue to serve air sports within their countries.

I now move to financial issues. FAI is not marketing itself or its commercial products effectively. You know we have taken steps trying to activate these possibilities. And as you know our Parachuting Commission IPC took a similar initiative creating IPETA for commercially exploiting some forms of parachuting. In very good cooperation the formal ownership of IPETA has been transferred to FAI whereas the actual running of the company, including executive decisions,

lies with IPC. However, so far there has not been any substantial results reported to me, but I know there is research into the market going on.

Our commercial company FAME is now 100% owned by FAI. The CEO, who was a part owner, has left the company. Executive Director Bob Henderson has handled the time consuming and difficult task, I thank him warmly for that. He sends you all his warmest greetings since he unfortunately is absolutely unable to attend. We have decided to put FAME "on hold" awaiting a new Marketing strategy and the result of our search for new partners. At present, FAME is thus inactive, not costing any money. Executive Director Frits Brink has kindly stepped in as the President of the FAME Board. Swiss law requires that a least one Board member is living in Switzerland, and until FAME is activated, Walter Vogel of Switzerland is now a member of the Board. Should we one day – not in not too long time I hope – be in the situation of considering of entering into a commercial venture – which is always related to some risk – FAME (or IPETA) can be the partner in the contract in order to safe guard FAI from that risk.

We are honoured to be a partner of the exclusive watch manufacturer Breitling, and we appreciate this very much. The support from Breitling has already been visible at many events, where FAI through the air sport commissions in turn can support the organizer financially. We need to handle this contract very carefully and responsibly, and we therefore now have a part-time employee dedicated to this, making sure that the expectations of Breitling are pro-actively met. I am sure you agree that having such a sponsor is both absolutely wonderful and also a door-opener to other future contracts.

And we are very pleased to again have signed a contract with our other main sponsor, Red Bull. Our connection to this action-filled brand is also proof that FAI does have a commercial value and that we should increase our efforts to find more external support. We have therefore entered into a marketing and branding investigation with a major sport marketing consultant firm in Europe, in order to find a structured way forward.

A lot of effort has been used to address the financial management matters and procedures that are required to ensure that the Air Sport Commissions are provided with up to date and ongoing financial management and reports on a timely basis.

In January we finally had an adequate accounting system in place; what a relief after years of inappropriate software.

The consolidation of the FAI accounts, commenced in 2011, was completed at 31/12/13.

Now, finally, each Air Sport Commission has a much more transparent insight into the transactions concerning their commissions. I thank our Finance Director Robert Clipsham and Finance Manager Cosette Mast sincerely for their tireless work with this. It has been a lot of hard work with arbiters, accountants, and commissions to put this all in order. Robert Clipsham's contributions to the "clean-up" of FAI and ASC finances have been most important.

We are now frequently using Western Union for international transactions as reimbursement of travel expenses. This is a channel with very limited administrative costs and is working very well. We have also introduced an acceptance of scanned expense claims; before we always asked for the original by post. The new procedure speeds up the payment considerably, and includes a statement that the claimant, by signing, promises not to submit the claim to another entity.

It has been a very active sporting year. I refer you to the Secretary General's Report later in the Conference. We have taken a large step closer to the International Olympic Committee and it was a landmark moment in the history of modern FAI when our Secretary General and I could sit down for 45 minutes with the President of IOC, Mr. Thomas Bach, in his office explaining the various options for air sports to become demonstration sports at Olympic Games. We are also now well established within the Asian Beach Games, arranged by the Asian Olympic Committees, and the World Games arranged by the International World Games Association, supported by IOC. We are more and more active as members of SportAccord where there are several most interesting options to take part in future new mega events. In this context I wish to thank our Regional Vice President Tengku Abdillah and our host, the NAC President of Thailand Group Captain Veerayuth Didyasirin, for their work for this, as well as our former Secretary General Mr. Max Bishop.

Our co-operation with the World Anti-Doping Agency WADA has been close, developing their gradual understanding for air sports and the untiring work by Executive Director Bob Henderson and our Anti-Doping Manager Ségolène Rouillon is gradually bearing fruit. We are now quite optimistic about being able to leave the mandatory whereabouts reporting system that has been a burden for many of our top athletes. I thank them for this – their sacrifice will be a relief for future air sport persons. As expected, we have had no doping cases but I must remind you all of the vital need to constantly tell the participants in major events to consider asking for a TUE – a Therapeutic Use Exemption – whenever they are under medication. There have been some very difficult medical issues for our TUE Panel within our Medical commission CIMP to consider and I thank them for their positive approach and balanced considerations.

We have signed a MoU with our affiliate member COLPAR, and will prepare similar documents for the African Air Sports Federation (FAA) and the Arab Air Sports Federation (AAF) subject to your acceptance of their International Affiliate Membership. These MoUs are based on the MoU for Asia which was the first regional association to have been accepted as FAI International Affiliate.

I wish to draw your attention to that several non-FAI event organisers have asked recently to be associated with the FAI brand without submitting to full FAI "control". A suggestion made by CIAM to call one such organizer, CONTEST that is organising aeromodelling events in Europe "Associated FAI Event Organiser", has been agreed.

In Europe we have, as you know, an MoU with Europe Airsports to handle the rapid and worrying developments in regulation of all aspects of airspace usage in Europe. Their various committees are doing a great job for you from Europe, and please help them by taking an active part in discussing these issues with your national aviation authorities. I thank the President of Europe Airsports David Roberts for his continuous work with this.

As promised at the previous General Conference FAI has taken the initiative to meet with the Secretary General of ICAO to exchange views on the international development of air sports and issues like Airspace regulations and air sport allocation practices. However so far we have not agreed on a meeting date.

A lot of FAI work is daily issues like the handling of Record claims, expense claims, accounting, meeting arrangements, Membership issues, communications and information, IT development, anti-doping issues etc.

But a lot of FAI work is also about the future. We have had a very in-depth discussion on the FAI vision and mission. This will be presented for your confirmation at this Conference. We have introduced a number of Expert groups to serve you, our Commissions and the Executive Board with suggestions for policies and for investigations into specific questions. The Technical Commissions that have become Expert Groups have demonstrated how effective this change in focus can be in serving the needs of the FAI.

But of course FAI is primarily a sport federation, the World Air Sport Federation. As such we have very high esteem in a number of communities, and it is our responsibility to maintain this position and to develop our sports to adjust to the modern age of communication; be it pictures, interviews, personalities, role models, rules or results. I thank the Air Sport Commissions for keeping their high standards and for their efforts in striving towards better visibility for our sports. Only through these efforts can we find media and sponsorship attention which, in my opinion, is the key to safe guard our sports for the future.

I am convinced that the Dubai 2015 World Air Games will be the door-opener, and eye-opener, that FAI badly needs. The work by the Head Office and Markus Haggenev especially is very promising indeed, but we must all help, avoid waiting on the stands to see how it goes. Our Sport Director has assembled a great team of air sport commission liaison officers to handle each aspect of these Games, and knowing Dubai – where amongst other things there has been arranged so many extremely successful parachuting Championships - I am confident it will be a success.

Our goal is to improve every aspect of FAI activity. We will therefore in the next FAI cycle:

- endeavour to bring another global sponsor on board
- have arranged a successful WAG and be planning for the next
- find 2 to 3 additional sponsors or partners to have a sustainable Income basis

- further develop FAI branded marketable Air Sport Events
- have an effective, proactive and comprehensive communication and media plan
- have strengthened our trustful relationships with you all
- have dialogue with ICAO at the management level
- have developed fruitful relationships with partners in new markets
- be established in World Games and Urban Games
- have an action plan to attract more young people and women

And, just as important, have an HO with reasonable work load.

Finally, thank you all for your devotion to air sports. You are the FAI. It is an honour to be your President.

I now thank you for your attention and patience. I look forward to a splendid 108th General Conference.

Thank you very much.

John Grubbström