



FAI President's report to the 112th FAI General Conference 2018

Honourable Presidents, Delegates and Observers, Air Sports Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great pleasure to be here with you at the 112th FAI General Conference in Luxor, Egypt, and to have this opportunity to share with you the exciting news and developments from the past year.

Around the world, air sports are going from strength to strength – with wonderful new sports attracting a whole new generation of aviation fans. The FAI is at the centre of this bright new chapter in the air sports story, doing its best to represent the interests of air sports enthusiasts in all disciplines and at all levels.

But just what is the FAI in 2018? As many of you know, the Federation was founded in 1905, at a time when the aeronautics field was rapidly growing and developing thanks to the courage and vision of aviation pioneers such as Alberto Santos-Dumont, the Wright brothers and Count Ferdinand Von Zeppelin.

Today, we are once again overseeing a time of major changes in the air sports world.

Drones, for example, are set to have a huge impact on how we live, work and travel, as well as on both the recreational and professional aviation fields. While new technology is changing the face of long-standing air sports, allowing participants to attain ever greater heights and giving fans a much more immersive experience thanks to live tracking and livestreaming on social media – for example at the recent Gordon Bennett Cup and, looking forward, at the forthcoming FAI World Drone Racing Championships.

To my mind, the need for an international federation to coordinate the aeronautics field, as well as ratify world and continental records, regulate air sports events, and promote safety and excellence throughout the air sports community, is therefore even greater today than it was 113 years ago.

It is to meet these new challenges and opportunities that we have come up with the “One FAI” Strategy, which we hope will result in all parts of the Federation – from Air Sports Commissions and the Executive Board to National Airport Controls – working together towards the common goal of ensuring the organisation benefits and supports all air sports in all parts of the world.

With your help and collaboration, I know we can create an even better and more integrated Federation – one that can weather the

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storms of a changing world, while supporting innovation right through from grassroots level to top-flight international competitions.

“One FAI” is the goal, and it is one we are all working hard to attain.

But there is no doubt that Secretary General Susanne Schödel, my colleagues in the Executive Board and the staff at our Head Office are the ones working hardest of all.

So I would like to take this chance to say a big thank you to them for all they have done for the FAI – both in Switzerland and on their many trips to attend meetings and events abroad – over the last 12 months.

In my role as President, I too have been busy travelling to a variety of countries to hold press conferences, talk with members, meet officials, and, of course, enjoy lots of fantastic air sports competitions and events.

Many of these took place in Asia, a region in which air sports are booming – with drone racing extremely popular in Korea and China, and paragliding attracting new fans across the continent.

In April, for example, I was delighted to take part in the SportAccord and Asia Focus meetings in Bangkok, Thailand, at both of which I met interesting and influential people who can help us to maximise the potential of this Asian trend and bring the joy of air sports to even more people in the region.

I was also honoured to meet with the Aero Sports Federation of China in Beijing, with which we signed a memorandum of understanding designed to further air sports in this huge, fast developing nation.

And to strengthen our links with the Russian air sports federations and government during visits to Moscow and Siberia.

The month of May saw me in the dynamic city of Istanbul, Turkey, where I attended the 2018 FAI Mid-year Meeting of the Active Members Presidents, the Commission Presidents and the Executive Board.

Expertly hosted by the Turkish Aeronautical Association Türk Hava Kurumu, and attended by all but one of the FAI Commission Presidents, as well as National Airsport Controls (NAC) representatives from 13 different countries, it was a friendly, constructive event at which

I was really pleased to see attendees from numerous countries demonstrating their commitment to FAI and the development of air sports around the world.

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Competition wise, other highlights of the year for me included the World Canopy Piloting Championships in Poland, the World Championships for Scale Model Aircraft in Switzerland, the Gordon Bennett Cup gas balloon race, at which I was lucky enough to attend the Opening Ceremony in Bern, and of course the Red Bull Air Race World Championships, which I loved being a part of once again in Austria this year.

It was also wonderful to be able to participate in the Asian Games 2018, which took place in Indonesia in August.

We on the Executive Board believe that championing the inclusion of air sports in big, multi-sport events is one of the best ways to promote and widen the appeal of air sports of all kinds.

So it was great to see paragliders taking part in the Asian Games – a multi-sport event of a size comparable with the Olympic Games.

Looking to the future, preparations for the next edition of FAI's own multi-sport event – the FAI World Air Games – are also now well underway.

The premier, international, multi-discipline air sports event conducted under FAI rules, the World Air Games is our flagship event – a true air sports extravaganza that attracts hundreds of the world's top athletes.

Set to be the biggest ever, the 2020 Games will be held across a total of 6 venues in Turkey and will involve approximately 2,800 participants, helpers and officials.

We will have to work hard to match the success of the WAG Dubai 2015, but we feel confident we have chosen a winning host country in Turkey, which was the host for the inaugural FAI World Air Games in 1997.

Having had the chance to visit most of the venues – including Turkey's capital Ankara, and the tourist destination of Antalya – earlier this year, I can assure you that there will once again be a spectacular backdrop to the thrills and spills taking place in the sky – our fabulous air sports arena.

While on the subject of multi-sport events, I also want to reiterate that we remain an active member of the Olympic Movement.

Just earlier this month, for example, Susanne attended the Olympism in Action Forum, a new initiative by the International Olympic Committee focused on building a better world through sport.

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Held in Buenos Aires in Argentina, this fascinating event covered a variety of topics ranging from women in sport to refugees and populations in conflict.

I was also present at the Olympic Day celebrations in Lausanne, at which I seized the chance to continue to discuss our support for the French Parachute Federation's bid to convince the IOC to include Skydiving in the Paris Olympic Games 2024.

Elsewhere, drones continued to be a big talking point both for the Executive Board and at the FAI Head Office in Lausanne.

Combining speed and skill, drone racing is one of the – if not the – fastest growing air sports in the world, especially among teenagers.

So we expect drone racing and other drone sports to play a major role in the future of air sports in general – not least as a gateway sport for the next generation of air sports fans.

The next event on the calendar this year is the forthcoming FAI World Drone Racing Championships – an inaugural edition I feel sure will be remembered for many years to come.

Taking off in just a few days time in Shenzhen, China, it is the first ever event of its kind, on the back of which we intend to launch a World Championship Masters series, a chain of events due to take off in 2019.

The aim of this wide-ranging series, culminating in a Grand Final that will also be held in Shenzhen in November 2019, is to create an entertaining mix of established drone racing, emerging drone sports, new technologies and entertainment.

Esports were also a theme at the second FAI International Drones Conference & Expo, which also took place in Lausanne at the beginning of last month.

Attendance was once again a must for anyone interested in developments in the world of drones, from the latest technology to the management of air space – and our continued use of it – in the years to come.

Speakers on the all-important subject of how we will share air space with drone users in the future included Yves Morier from the European Aviation Safety Agency, who told us that “U-Space will be a reality by 2019 with a step-by-step regulatory approach”, and Benoit Curdy from the Global UTM Association (GUTMA), who highlighted the LAANC program - Low Altitude Authorisation and Notification Capability – already being rolled out on a test level around airports in the US.

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Whatever systems are used, it is clear the air sports community will need strong representation from the FAI to protect its interests – a challenge we feel increasingly well placed to meet and exceed.

Dear friends, I am looking forward to this General Conference, including the presidential elections that I must admit I am hoping will go in my favour! I would like to thank the organisers – the Aeroclub of Egypt, and in particular its President of Honour Mr Samir Raouf.

Whatever happens here, the forthcoming year will undoubtedly be packed with yet more developments across the global air sports community.

With your support, we will continue to fly ever higher, making the most of this changing world to spread the joy of air sports and ensure people everywhere can keep making the sky their stadium!

Thank you for your attention,

Frits Brink

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