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ISC PLENARY MEETING - 2024

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This report covers my 6th and final year as your President because, as I announced last year, I have decided not to stand for re-election.

The report will cover the highlights of this year but also offers a review of the six, rather unusual years, that this bureau has had to face.

This year was a little quieter than previous years with only 8 IBDs against 10 in 2022 and 13 in 2021. However, we did have to take some major decisions relating to the 2024 Indoor event in Macau, China at the request of the Organiser; the Style and Accuracy Event in Italy, that had to be postponed due to terrible storms that occurred on the east coast of Italy in May; and the difficult decision, together with the Israeli NAC, to cancel the four World Championships (FS, AE, WS and SP) events scheduled in October 2024.

We relaunched the bidding process for these four events with November 15th, as a deadline. We felt it important to select a replacement host (or hosts) as early as possible to give them the maximum possible time to make the necessary arrangements for a successful event less than a year away.

Competitions were successfully held in all disciplines this year: the Indoor Skydiving World Championships in Liptovsky Mikulas, Slovakia, the WS and SP European Championships and World Cups in Prostejov, Czech, the S&A European Championships and World Cups in Ravenna, Italy and the CP and FCP European Championships and World Cups. We have finally cleared the effects of COVID with the Formation Skydiving and Artistic Events European Championships and World Cups in Voss, Norway.

We thank all the Organisers for their support with a special mention for the Norwegian NAC/Organiser and the Slovakian NAC/Organiser who, following Covid, both accepted to move their events from 2021 to 2023, consequently enabling us to get back to our pre-Covid competition schedule.

This year we tested having one remote juror at each of our events. No major problems were encountered. In Prostejov, the third juror chose to be present at his own cost and in Voss, Elisabet came for two days to enable the Bureau to hold a mid-term meeting as all the other Bureau members, except for Gail, were already on-site in other roles. Her temporary presence did enable us to handle one issue directly, others were handled via WhatsApp.

What became apparent is that with only two Jury members on site, both must really contribute to the workload, which of course will always be variable depending on the number of records and/or protests. The third remote juror could assist in other ways that just on-line meetings or message exchanges, records could also be managed at a distance.

A couple of recent International Appeal Tribunals, one of which I had the honour to Chair, concerned remote juries and highlighted the need to have very competent and knowledgeable Jurors on site when the other members are remote. Being in the same time zone give or take an hour or two, is important too. Commissions are aware of the need for competent jurors and are tending to reduce their list of eligible Jurors and have implemented training or mentoring to ensure a reasonable skill level. Generic Jury training is also being considered at FAI level. The subject is not closed for us and will certainly be part of our discussions during the Open Meetings.

The Jury role is important and mandatory. The FAI Controller role is specific to ISC but is also very important especially when new and inexperienced Organisers host one or several of our events and this has proven particularly true for Indoor events. The Controller needs to have experience in running a competition and must take initiative and work closely with the Organiser. Experience is necessary and must be taken into consideration when selecting someone for the role. I would like to thank all the FAI Controllers this year for their work.

Looking back over the six years I would like to highlight several points and actions taken by the bureau that I have had the pleasure to preside.

I was elected in 2018 together with the first ever all female Bureau and I would like to thank all the bureau members:

past=>

Susan who left us in 2020,

Doris who served you well during our first mandate,

Aliya who was forced to leave as collateral damage caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine,

Alex who was temporarily our recording secretary,

and present=>

Elisabet and Gail who been faithful and hard-working bureau members for all three mandates,

Rina who has been with us for two mandates working for us but also as our interface to the Judges Committee,

Vera who is our very proficient recording secretary and,

last but not least, Jim, who joined us last year, breaking our 5-year all-female record.

When we set out on this path, we set some initial objectives:

New Image - we introduced a new name replacing Parachuting with Skydiving to better include Indoor Skydiving and we also had a new logo designed for us. This is our legacy to you.

Female Participation to align with IOCs gender equality policy. This is something that is very difficult to achieve in our sport. It has to be up to each NAC to determine its own policy and contrary to the IOC, the FAI cannot provide a financial incentive to facilitate this.

Olympic Project In 2018, the French Parachute Federation put forward Indoor Skydiving as a potential new sport to be selected by the Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the 2024 edition of the Olympic Games. Unfortunately, our sport didn't even make the short list. It is important to understand that being selected as a new sport is no guarantee for longevity and

"new" sports do not benefit from the financial windfall that the "core" sports do. It requires a core sport to be removed before a new sport is considered a real Olympic sport. So, the Olympic dream remains just that and, in my opinion, should definitely not be a key focus for the coming years as it is not for FAI either. FAI remains recognised by the IOC which does help some countries get funding from their National Olympic Committee, but it also means that we have to respect and submit to WADA rules and constraints.

Media Focus and use of Skydive TV - during the 6 years, things have changed considerably, we lost Susan who managed our Media exposure and Skydive TV did not provide what we were looking for. We have been working with the company the Edge for several years now and you will see from the report that the Media WG that our social media presence continues to grow, and they have recommended new targets for 2024. This company has given us good value for money and excels in finding subjects that a volunteer could never do.

Liaison with Professionals - we have had regular exchanges with the Organisers of the FAI World Swoop Freestyle who now run a company called Air Sports Group. Although we signed a new agreement in 2021, the event, halted due to Covid, has not been picked up again due to other projects. We continue to follow this up and will make everyone aware if the event starts again.

The notion of professionals in skydiving broadens every year. We interface with scoring system providers who are, for some of them, professional companies. The drop zones we work with are almost always now private enterprises as are the tunnels. Many of our national teams include professional skydivers who take time out to participate in our events. ISC is, however, for the most part, a volunteer entity and our ISC officials work for the love of the sport and give up their time willingly. Regardless of the role occupied at any given time, we all need to behave like professionals representing both ISC and FAI. Sometimes we need to be reminded of that, and everyone's expectations set at a reasonable level.

In 2019, after our first year in office, we initiated an Extended Bureau Workshop, looking at key priorities for the coming years and challenging Committees to develop their rules to make our events more spectator-friendly when possible. The Workshop that was facilitated by a professional, was successful although some of the ideas were lost or abandoned due to Covid.

Covid hit us at the beginning of our third year in office and our second mandate. Almost overnight, we went from looking towards the future to survival mode. Three weeks before the start of the 2020 Indoor Skydiving World Cup, the world shut down causing us to have to postpone the event and deal with the fall out. We genuinely believed that the postponement would be for only a few months and rescheduled to October 2020. How wrong we were. Re-shuffling competitions, negotiating with Organisers, dealing with already paid entry fees and determining how we would hold our next Plenary kept us very occupied.

The organiser of the 2020 Mondial, held on until the very last minute, hoping that the event would take place. Conscious of the need for people to make travel arrangements we finally forced the issue and announced that the competition would be postponed until 2021. However, that required negotiations and finding agreements with the other Organisers impacted by this rescheduling. I would like to thank them all for their cooperation and understanding. I would also like to thank all the delegations who took a hit when we decided

not to reimburse 100% of the entry fees of the Indoor World Cup using the Force Majeure clause in the General Section to enable that.

We then had to organise the first ever fully electronic Plenary meeting. It was a challenge and was held over two weekends. Perhaps not the ideal solution but with no experience we did the best we could, and it worked. Again, thanks to all the people who had to get up at odd times of the night to participate depending on where they were in the world.

Covid continued to cause problems in 2021 and the Indoor event scheduled for 2021 did not take place and was moved to 2023, the 2020 event taking place in 2022. We did manage to hold the 2020 Mondial though in August 2021 and it was successfully run although we had to split the events into two separate periods to avoid too many people being on site at once. Siberia actually proved to be fairly clear of Covid, thankfully, and very few cases resulted from the presence of so many people.

What we had not foreseen however, was the WADA and then the CAS ruling which seriously compromised the event being held at all. We were obliged, together with FAI, to negotiate with WADA in order to convince them that it would be impossible to find another host (or hosts) in such short time to hold our 7 World Championships. The decision was tardy, but we were successful, and the event could go ahead. However, holding an event in Russia when Russian athletes could not participate other than as neutral athletes, and neither the Russian flag could be flown, nor the Russian national anthem played was not easy to accept for our hosts and some of the visiting athletes. Participants behaviour was not always respectful or understanding of the situation which was not always easy to manage. We could not control what was posted on Facebook and other social media which was stressful knowing that we were observed and even had a visit from a WADA representative during the event. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Russian hosts and send a kind thought to our friends there who have nothing to do with the war and are deprived of international competition until the situation changes. The same applies to Belarus. Saying this, I in no way condone the war and was very pleased to see that Ukrainian athletes were able to attend some of our events, thanks partly to the generosity of organisers or other athletes.

2022 saw activities pick up again and the year began with a part electronic and part physical Plenary meeting. A big thank you to the Romanian Aeroclub for hosting this somewhat complicated meeting.

We managed to hold all the competitions that were scheduled but struggled with the World Games that were scheduled in Birmingham, Alabama, USA. Just prior to the Plenary, FAI was contacted by the Organiser raising concerns about the readiness of our event. The situation was finally resolved and thanks to an enormous last-minute effort was put in a team from the USA, the event was a resounding success. Gratitude was expressed at the last Plenary. ISC has participated in the World Games since 1997 and was the first Air Sport to do so. Over the years, other Air Sports have participated but have not been retained except for Drones which, after a first appearance in 2022, have been retained for 2025 in Chengdu, China. Unfortunately, Skydiving has not been retained. The 2025 World Games are to be green. No new infrastructure is to be built and no fossil fuel used. That excludes us. We initially submitted two disciplines, Accuracy Landing and Canopy Piloting. FAI decided to go with CP even though it

did not meet the specifications. Two other disciplines were also submitted, Drones and foot-launched Paragliding Acro. They were both selected although there is still some uncertainty about Paragliding Acro as, so far, no satisfactory hill/mountain has been found. This is a blow for us but should lead us to think about what we want for the future. Should we develop greener events such as Accuracy Landing using a winch, or should we investigate the use of electric powered aircraft? Or do we even want to continue with the World Games which, in spite of the excitement for the competitors, has done nothing to increase participation in our sport, has not given us any major media exposure (there was next to none in Birmingham) or led to sponsorship? That is a question for the next ISC President and Bureau.

Another subject that has not yet really found a satisfactory solution is the management of competition records. Due to an excessive backlog of ISC and other records to be ratified by FAI, a person was designated to help FAI resolve this in 2015 and was officially given the title of IPC Records Officer at the 2016 Plenary. The role was officialised in 2017 by an introduction into the Internal Regulations but then removed in 2020 due to a complete failure of the function. In parallel to this, in 2016, an IBD was issued whereby ISC would manage and pay for all ISC competition records, and this was first done at the Mondial 2016. I'm not sure what was the initial incentive? Perhaps to increase the number of ISC record holders, perhaps to reduce the special reserves through payment of records, perhaps to encourage claiming continental records? This was not defined in the IBD nor presented at the 2017 Plenary Meeting when the IBD was ratified. However, what ensued was an increased workload, initially for the FAI Controller (who happened to be me) and then for the Jury President but also for FAI and the ISC Records Officer. The backlog at FAI did not decrease but the cost of record management did although not apparent until 2018 when the new bureau realised that records were in fact costing about 8000€ of unbudgeted funds. The unacceptable backlog was cleared by two bureau members in 2018 and although discussed at the 2020 Plenary, a status quo was decided until the following year. Of course, COVID temporarily stopped records being claimed but at the 2021 Plenary, to reduce the burden on the sanction fee, our Financial Secretary proposed to stop paying for Continental records and a Temporary Working Group was set up to look at the broader picture of all Records. The reduced FAI fee that had initially been negotiated but never formally recorded (80 CHF per record) was renegotiated. The current situation is that we, ISC, continue to pay for World Records (75CHF) and any Continental record resulting from the World Record (an additional 75CHF) but Continental records, although the paperwork is still managed by the Jury, are paid for by the claimant (300CHF). This solution remains unsatisfactory as it generates work for the now reduced on-site Jury but also for FAI, because they now are obliged to chase up claimants as a record cannot be ratified unless prior payment has been received. Few claimants are prepared to pay the 300 CHF for a Continental record and although initially in agreement, many end up not paying and the record (and the work involved to file it) lost. No proposal for change is submitted this year but it remains a subject for debate.

A key role of an Air Sport Commission President is to contribute to FAI work. It is important to realise that, whether we like it or not, and for some time we did not at all and thought of breaking away, we are tied to FAI.

To ensure that the organisation provides us with what we need, the ISC President must be the clear voice of the Commission. However, it is also important that each ISC delegate ensures

that his NAC delegate to the General Conference is aware of Commission needs too and is able to defend them when required.

The ISC President is an ex officio member of the Commission Presidents Group (CPG). This group meets monthly on Zoom and attends the FAI General Conference. Contribution to the work of this group is important. ISC is considered by the FAI secretariat to be the benchmark Commission in many areas as our regulations and procedures are sound and efficient. We need to keep it that way and in the coming year, FAI will be looking at harmonising Commission procedures, so ISC presence in this project will be particularly important.

As you all know, I have been active at FAI level for many years initially as a delegate to the General Conference for France from 2004 to 2014, Executive Director from 2014 to 2016 and as ISC President since 2018. Gail has strongly contributed also since 2021, helping with the implementation of the new accounting system and being part of the Statutes Working Group, of which I am now Chair.

CASI (General Air Sport Commission) is another place where ISC has a role. Every year the ASCs nominate a delegate to sit beside delegates from 11 NACs, elected by the General Conference for two-year periods (5 one year and 6 the following year). CASI deals with the General Section of the FAI Sporting Code, Appeals, Jury Guidelines, the new FAI Disciplinary Code and new air sports for which no Commission has yet been set up.

I have been involved in CASI, representing France, since 2006 when I was nominated secretary. I maintained that role for about 12 years until I became the representative of ISC. At that time, I became CASI Vice President and, currently I am CASI First Vice President. Although I will stand down as your President, I request that I be left the ISC delegate to CASI until the next CASI Plenary in October 2024. This will enable me to finish the work I have been involved in and do a clean handover to my successor in this role. Elisabet Mikaelsson, our First Vice President, is currently secretary for CASI and will remain so as long as she is re-elected each year.

I have been part of ISC since 1988 and since that time I have missed only two Plenary meetings. I have been active and at times even visionary when I was fighting for the introduction of Indoor Skydiving.

As the first female President of ISC leading the first all-female bureau, there have been a couple of incidents that would never have occurred if I had been a male. At the time they occurred there was no formal recourse possible. That has changed with the introduction this year of an FAI disciplinary code. The extremely unpleasant and insulting Facebook posts during the 2020 Plenary and again during the 2020 Mondial (which the author finally apologised for and ultimately modified the posting) and the unacceptable outburst by a delegate during the 2022 Plenary would now be sanctionable offences. It should not be necessary to go that far. I have always considered that only competence should count, and it is unfortunate to note that the need to be insulting and sexist still exists. I wanted to make this statement in the hope that it never happens again and regardless of who we are, we can respect the people elected to work for our sport and never need to use this new Disciplinary Code for such behaviour.

In my 35 years in ISC, I have seen changes, some very positive and others not so well thought out.

I think the coming years will see yet more changes. Gone are the times when Organisers could rely on subsidies from their government to host International Events, gone are the times when we received enough hosting bids to enable us to choose where we wanted to go. Even though some countries are still able to hand out strong financial support (Middle East countries mainly, for which we are very grateful) we are being forced to accept the real cost of hosting a competition and this is reflected in the ever-increasing entry fees and the lack of bids for the coming years.

We are forced to witness that athletes are keen to participate in events put on by other Organisers (using FAI competition rules though) because they are shorter, cheaper and simpler to implement (less judges, no Jury, no FAI Controller). Some of those events have made their way to the FAI Sporting Calendar as second category events, and we introduced a Licence Fee last year to give the right to the Organiser to be on the calendar and to use our competition rules. Hopefully this will continue, and my dream would be to see these different Cups and Series have the FAI acronym before their name.

Although the events we are responsible for are World and Continental Championships and World Cups, that are prestigious and must remain that way, we need to support our Organisers by making reasonable demands and setting the right expectations for all.

We still need to look at making them less costly for an organiser and consequently for our athletes, determine how many officials we really need, how we control their competence and ensure that the scoring systems we recommend are adequate and fit for the job. There have been a couple of situations this year that show these points still need looking at.

The "job" of President will now belong to someone else and I wish all the very best to my successor and the team that will work with him or her.

It has been an honour to serve you in so many ways since 1988. I will continue to contribute to our sport in other ways, hopefully with your approval within CASI for another year and I remain Chair of the FAI Statutes Working Group until 2025.

I extend my most heartfelt thanks to all the people I have worked with over the years and particularly to those who have worked with me on the bureau, those who will be present at the Plenary Elisabet, Doris, Rina, Jim, and Vera and those who are not, Gail and Aliya. I don't forget the extended bureau members as well.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Orlando where I will celebrate my (partial) retirement and the arrival of a new bureau who, hopefully, will be brimming with new ideas and objectives, and to whom I extend my best wishes for success and hope that they will have as much satisfaction and pleasure that I have had serving you.

Gillian Rayner  
November 2023