

## **102nd FAI ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE – ST. VINCENT, ITALY**

### **REPORT ON WORK OF FAI MEMBERS, FAI AIRSPORT ACTIVITIES AND THE FAI SECRETARIAT**

Dear Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since we met in Rhodes last year, we have continued to build on the successes of last year. As our President has already reported, the Red Bull Air Race support contract, set up and signed by him in early 2007, has proved to be a major success. Roger Schad, our main Delegate, attends the Races and on each occasion writes detailed reports with specific recommendations, which are taken very seriously by the Red Bull Air Race management. As a result several small adjustments have been made to rules and practices in what was already a highly professional and safety-conscious organisation.

We have also identified a Deputy Delegate, who has been contracted to take over the role of FAI Delegate when Mr Schad, for whatever reason, is not available. His name is Ben Ruijs and he is a recently retired Air Force colonel, a fast-jet pilot and airshow organiser from the Netherlands. Mr Ruijs attended two races (Abu Dhabi and Rotterdam) under training and recently "went solo" at the Porto event. As the President said, we are now discussing with Red Bull ways in which our cooperation may be extended, to the mutual benefit of both parties, and I will come back to this shortly.

The 2009 World Air Games preparation phase has been a major preoccupation. As you heard yesterday, our coordinator, Jean-Marc Badan, has paid numerous visits to Turin to try and ensure that the first "new-format" Games meet the vision and requirements of the FAI. We do not expect that his work-load will ease in the months ahead.

Thanks to Jeff Zaltman of Flying Aces, we have again this year secured good media coverage of several of our major sporting events. We are in the final stages of negotiation with him to extend our agreement for the coverage of FAI Championships for the next few years.

Our new General Projects Manager, Rob Hughes, whom most of you will have met by now, quickly became a fully operational and very busy member of staff. He was responsible for all the preparations for this Conference, and has also worked tirelessly to regularise FAI's position with regard to the World Anti-Doping Agency, which this year is checking compliance with the Code.

We continue to make good progress on the establishment of the centralised database of FAI Sporting Licences. You can see here 2 screenshots of the project's website. The first shows you an example of the data upload screen that NACs will have to go through to enter their information into the system. The second screenshot shows you the user account configuration screen. You can clearly see the possibilities offered to time-limit the validity of an account, and restrict an account access to certain disciplines only.

Any person who wishes to compete in an event on the FAI Sporting Calendar must hold an FAI Sporting Licence. These are issued by you, the Members. But until now, we have been unable to advise contest organisers whether or not a particular entrant has a valid FAI Sporting Licence.

Now, all NACs must up-load their Sporting Licence data-files in Excel to the central FAI database, and contest organisers will be able to see at a glance, on-line, whether or not a person has a valid licence. Initially, we will require that data is uploaded using the Excel template we have already provided to NACs. The possibility to add individual licences using an on-screen web form will also be available in the future.

We have made great efforts to ensure that the system is very simple to use. In January 2009, the system will become mandatory, meaning that a FAI Sporting Licence will only be considered valid if the details of it have been up-loaded into the central data-base. NACs will determine the frequency at which they need to update their information in the database. The gains for them, contest organisers and FAI contest officials will be enormous.

As the FAI President mentioned, he and I have had the opportunity to represent the FAI at several different Championships, events, functions and meetings. I would like to single out just three of these. Recently, we visited Kiel, capital of the German region of Schleswig-Holstein, where the air sports community has been playing a leading role in partnership with the government to institute a system of environmental audits of sports clubs and associations. This project has been very beneficial to air sports in the region and we all have a lot to learn from it, as you heard yesterday from our Environmental Commission President.

A few weeks ago I visited Nis in Serbia for the 1<sup>st</sup> European Paragliding Accuracy Championship. Here I saw two things. First, a new FAI discipline which is expanding rapidly and attracting young competitors. This shows that we do have the capacity constantly to evolve and respond to the ambitions of the air sport community. Second, I saw a young and vibrant country which, despite the major difficulties it has been through in recent years, is re-emerging as a leader in air sport, with strong ambitions to host more and more FAI Championships. We all benefit from the efforts of such countries, which are prepared to assume these international responsibilities.

Finally, the FAI President and I recently attended a meeting in Zürich of Presidents and Secretaries General of our German-speaking NACs (Austria, Germany and Switzerland). This meeting focused, amongst other things, on ways in which the FAI could become a stronger and more cohesive body. There was a feeling that we had lost something of the community spirit after the abolition of the FAI Council in the year 2000. One idea, which I will come back to at the end of my report, is that there could be an annual spring meeting of NAC Presidents in Lausanne, to prepare the

agenda for the autumn General Conference. Such meetings would also offer opportunities for social interaction and the creation of a better international sense of community, as well as allowing the top elected officers of FAI Member organisations to visit the FAI Secretariat and see at first hand what goes on there.

Our Executive Director Bengt-Eric Fonsell wrote to you some months ago concerning the role and responsibilities of FAI Vice Presidents. I regret to report that, although there are many honourable exceptions, his letter appears not to have had the desired effect. It was again a great struggle for us to obtain the minimum required number of email votes for the award of FAI medals and diplomas. And it was clear that in some cases Vice Presidents who did vote, either did not understand what was required, or had not read carefully through the criteria for the awards, or the citations nominating people for awards. In the next agenda item, you will be invited to agree that the Statutes Working Group undertake a thorough review of the role played by FAI Vice Presidents.

### FAI MEMBERSHIP

The FAI Membership stands at :

Active Members : **80** (78)

Associate Members : **6** (7)

Temporary Members : **8** (8)

International Affiliate : **3** (3)

*(Last year's figures in brackets)*

Overall, FAI membership continues to be stable.

### FAI CHAMPIONSHIPS

In 2007, **32** Championships were held in **22** different countries on five continents, with a total of **2 791** competitors. A total of seventy (70) different member countries participated in these competitions, another record high (68 last year, also a record).

However, the total number of FAI Championships dropped last year to 32 (from 40, 37 and 36 in preceding years). It remains to be seen whether this is a lasting reversal of the previous upward trend.

### FLIGHT SAFETY

139 fatalities were reported in 2007, as compared with 191 in 2006, 175 in 2005 and 339 in 2004 (approximately the same number of countries reporting). Let's hope that this reduction proves to be statistically significant. We must not lower our guard. Far too many people die unnecessarily in air sports.

### WORLD RECORDS

No fewer than 264 World Records were ratified in 2007. The last year has seen some remarkable flights. Amongst the most noteworthy records ratified (and I regret not being able to mention many more) were:

### **Ballooning: “Small is beautiful”**

- **Pierrick Duvoisin (SUI):**

Duration in AX-01 (hot air balloons up to 250m3): **6h 20min 38s**

- **Pauline Baker (IRE)**

Altitude in AX-03 (hot air balloons up to 600m3) : **4 272 m**

### **Aeroplanes: The first « green record »**

- **Kristan Maynard (USA)**

Efficiency in C-1b (Take-off weight <1000kg): **14.1 km/kg**

### **Sailplanes: Speed over long distance**

- **Anja Kohlrausch (GER)**

Women's Speed over  $\Delta$  1000 km (15M gliders): **121.5 km/h**

- **Laszlo Hegedüs (HUN)**

Speed over  $\Delta$  1250 km (Open Class): **151.5 km/h**

### **Model Aircraft: Patience rewarded**

- **Valery Myakinin (RUS)**

Distance over closed circuit (Radio-controlled Glider): **739.2 km**

### **Parachuting: “All together, jump!”**

- **International Team**

Largest Canopy Formation: **100 parachutists**

### **Paragliders and Hang Gliders: Why do it alone?**

- **Frank Brown, Marcelo Prieto and Rafael Monteiro Saladini (BRA)**

Straight distance in O-3 (paragliders): **461.6 km**

- **Patrick Chopard (FRA), Pascal Lanser (FRA) and Carlos Puñet (ESP)**

Out and return distance in O-5 (Hang gliders): **348.4 km**

### FAI STAFF

The total number of staff, including the Secretary General, is 6 full-time and one part-time (2.5 days a week). I mentioned our new member of staff, Rob Hughes (General Projects Manager). The FAI staff members all remain very loyal, committed and hard-working, and I thank them warmly for their support.

### SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES

A significant proportion of my own time is devoted to helping Commissions with problems involving international Championships, and dealing with problems in member countries. I reported yesterday on the membership difficulties, some of which were very time-consuming indeed, and not just for me. Let me say a few words about Championship organisation. First, the great majority of our Championships are well organised, in good faith, by competent people of integrity. Unfortunately, however, in a few cases, bids to organise our events are put forward by individuals or groups that are either in conflict with their own national federations and NACs, or else are motivated principally by the opportunities a World Championship offers to generate profits. It is therefore of great importance that all bids to host Championships are analysed in depth and with a critical eye. In particular, Commissions must make sure that the budgets for the event are realistic in the light of local circumstances, and that when the organiser is not the NAC, it nevertheless has the full and unreserved backing of that NAC.

Following a problem that arose with one particular Championship, the Commission concerned has now agreed that after the plenary makes a provisional decision to award a Championship to a country a cooling-off period of 3 months will follow, allowing in- depth investigations to take place before the Organiser Agreement is signed.

As the FAI President has pointed out, the world is becoming more complex and legalistic. We have no option but progressively to make our procedures more professional and legally watertight. The days of gentlemen's agreements between friends are, alas, behind us.

Another case that took up an excessive amount of unproductive staff time, as well as that of the voluntary CASI Appeals Tribunal, was an appeal against a decision of an International Jury at a FAI Championship to uphold judges' decisions as being final. The CASI Tribunal rejected the appeal, but that was not the end of the matter, because the matter was then referred to the Court for Arbitration in Sport in Lausanne. Happily, they rejected the case on procedural grounds.

## NAC PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE IN LAUSANNE?

Let me come back to the idea I mentioned earlier that emerged from a meeting with our German-speaking members.

It is proposed that we should organize a NAC Presidents' Conference in Lausanne next spring, almost certainly in May 2009. The main agenda item for the Conference would be preparation of the FAI General Conference in Incheon, Korea. The President of each FAI Active Member would receive a personal invitation, and would have the right to be accompanied by one other person (an interpreter, or another person of his choice). Travel, food and lodging costs would be at NACs' expense, except possibly for one meal/social occasion. The programme would be arranged to allow delegates to arrive on one day and leave on the following day.

So that we know whether this is an idea that is worth pursuing, could you please put your hand up (one hand per country!) if you think that your President would

- definitely,
- probably
- probably not
- definitely not

attend such a meeting.

*(Count hands)*

Many thanks. We will be in touch with you soon on this subject.

## RED BULL AIR RACE

The FAI President referred in his report to the possible sanctioning by FAI of the Red Bull Air Races. It is quite obvious that these events do not fall under the normal FAI rules for sporting events. Participation is by invitation only, and is reserved for a very small number of exceptionally talented individuals. Nevertheless, the Races attract enormous public attention, with vast crowds of hundreds of thousands of spectators, and large TV audiences. The FAI would benefit greatly from being visibly associated with these events. And furthermore the Races constitute a possibly significant source of income for the FAI.

Earlier this year, in agreement with CIVA, we agreed to sanction the aerobatics competition at the Al Ain Air Show in the United Arab Emirates, even though this was an invitational event that was not run strictly in accordance with the FAI Sporting Code. The event brought in much needed income of US\$40 000 to FAI. The FAI Executive Board believes that in the modern world, we must retain the flexibility to make quick decisions relating to commercial air sport events that are not fully compliant with the Sporting Code, but which could be of great benefit to the FAI and all its Members.

For this reason, we have a specific proposal to put to the General Conference in connection with the Red Bull Air Race. This proposal was distributed to you this

morning. We would like to ask for the General Conference's approval to give a sanction to the Red Bull Air Race World Championship in return for a sanction fee of 6 figures. The FAI Executive Board is convinced that this proposal will bring significant net benefits to us all, without in any way threatening our traditional FAI Championships and other 1<sup>st</sup> category events. What we are proposing is, in essence, that the Conference should decide, by agreeing to this proposal, to acknowledge reality, namely that major competitive air sport events exist in the world that are totally outside our control, but to which we can add value by lending our name, under strictly controlled conditions. In return, benefits will accrue to FAI and its members in the form of additional financial resources and more public exposure.

We therefore ask you for formal agreement to the recommendations shown in the paper that we have distributed, namely:

**A: to approve signature of an agreement between RBAR and FAI containing the following features:**

- The FAI gives official recognition to the RB-AR World Championship as a special competitive international event, conducted under the RB-AR's own rules.
- The use by RBAR of the title *Red Bull Air Race World Championship* is authorised by the FAI in return for an annual sanction fee that would permit a significant discount to be given on FAI subscriptions.
- This sanction would entitle RBAR to the following benefits:
  - Inclusion of RBAR races on the FAI Sporting Calendar (but differentiating clearly between FAI Championships and the RBAR Championship).
  - Archiving by FAI of RBAR results.
  - Use of the FAI logo and flag in connection with RBAR events, subject to FAI Executive Board approval.
  - Special FAI medals to be awarded to the overall winners of each annual series, in addition to the medals given by RBAR.
- RB-AR and FAI form a Joint Review Committee, which would meet at intervals as required, to take stock of cooperation between the two entities and make joint decisions on matters of mutual interest, subject always to FAI General Conference approval on matters of policy.

**B. to instruct:**

- CASI to amend Sporting Code, General Section Article 3.3.1. to read: *Unless otherwise decided by the FAI General Conference, the FAI and NACs shall only recognise sporting events that are held in accordance with FAI rules.*
- GAC to amend Sporting Code, Section 2 Article 7.1. to read: *"The regulations summarize the general contents of the rules for competitions under G.A.C. responsibility. The detailed Competition Rules for these competitions shall be approved by G.A.C. and will be issued as an Annex. Rules for Red Bull Air Races are under the responsibility of the FAI General Conference."*

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I feel that despite the world financial crisis we are well poised, with your support, to improve the overall financial position of the FAI. We have already increased the capacity of the Secretariat to help Members and Commissions. And two companies are seeking to obtain media rights to FAI's major events. With your agreement to the extension of our cooperation with Red Bull, we will be able to move forward to the next stage.

I would like to close by thanking our very hard-working FAI President and our Board Members for their unfailing support. They have all treated me and my staff with great consideration, and it has been a privilege for us to serve you to the best of our ability.

I certainly look forward to talking with many of you this evening and tomorrow during our visit to the site of the 2009 World Air Games.

Max Bishop

Secretary General  
4 October 2008