



**WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION**

**WBF President Report  
at the EBL Officers Seminar  
Roma, Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016**

Mr. President of the European Bridge League, Yves Aubry, Mr. President Emeritus of the WBF and EBL, José Damiani, Mr. President of the Italian Bridge Federation, Gianni Medugno, Presidents and colleagues, Delegates, dear Friends,

I am very pleased and honoured to be here with you and I want to express my gratitude to my dear friend Yves for the kind invitation and the opportunity given to me to attend, once again, the EBL Officers' Seminar, a key event in the Federation's life, that reached its 8<sup>th</sup> edition.

Let me say that I am very proud to have not missed any of these events, introduced for the first edition in 2000 in Viserbella, Italy, in the second year of my Presidency.

This year the seminar focused very important item that is the development of our discipline, of our movement: You had the opportunity to hear very interesting reports and to examine and discuss in detail the various aspects of the matter in specific workshops. I am sure that you all, your national Federations and the European Bridge League will take profit by this exciting meeting.

Today I am here to report about the WBF, what it is, which are its purposes, what it did, what it is doing.

An Ancient Greek aphorism said "Gnothi Seauton" that means "know thyself". To be able to achieve your goals you have to know very well yourself.

As you all know the WBF is the Federation of the National Bridge Federations. It is recognised by the IOC and by FISU as an International Sport Federation, it's member of ARISF, SportAccord and IMSA.

The purpose of the World Bridge Federation shall be to promote, foster, promulgate and develop the sport of Bridge throughout the world; to be in the Olympic Movement, remaining affiliated with International Olympic Committee (IOC) as a recognized International Federation (IF) in conformity with the requirements of the Olympic Charter

and to contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in the Olympic Charter, in particular by way of spread of Olympism and Olympic education; to federate national contract bridge association in all countries; to devise methods and conduct competitions to award international or world championship titles; to establish standard laws for its contests adopting the International Code and supplementing it as may be required, but not inconsistent with it; to support and encourage the promotion of sports ethics; to dedicate its efforts to ensuring that in bridge, contests the spirit of fair play prevails; to fight against doping in sport and to take measures, the goal of which is to prevent endangering the health of bridge players.

This purpose has not to be intended as a simple enunciation, we have to strongly believe in it, we have to be strongly convinced of its rootedness. This has to be the guideline of our activity, always impressed in our mind.

Following the way traced and the tremendous job done under the leadership of my predecessor ad mentor, José Damiani, to whom I want to express our gratitude and to thank him on behalf of the entire bridge movement, in the past five years we worked to consolidate the structure of our Federation and to adopt initiatives and tools to improve our organisation and to develop our discipline.

Today the World Bridge Federation is a non-profit making sport organisation of a strictly civil nature, incorporated in the Swiss Laws and registered in the Commercial Register in accordance with art. 60 ff. of the Swiss Civil Code.

The WBF consists of 46 NBOs in Europe, 3 in North America, 10 in South America, 12 in Asia & Middle East, 18 in Central America & Caribbean, 12 in Asia Pacific, 4 in South Pacific, 12 in Africa. In total 117 affiliated NBOs.

We have already started to work with our Swiss Layers looking at the new step: the notarization of our Constitution and the introduction of a modern Statutes and By Laws not only in conformity with the Olympic Charter and the IOC Principles, but definitively respecting the fundamental principles of democracy, transparency, integrity, reciprocity and division of the powers. We want in addition to recognise to the General Assembly (the Congress) more duties and powers, including the election of some members of the Executive Council.

The WBF has its Headquarters at la Maison de Sport International in Lausanne, sharing it with the European Bridge League. The WBF has two employees in Lausanne, Simon Fellus, who provides administrative and secretarial services and Fotis Skoularikis, who provides the management of the website and IT services. Both of them provide their services to the European Bridge League as well and the related costs are shared by the WBF and EBL.

The WBF has in addition a Presidential Office in Milano, with an employee, Marina Madia, who provides the secretarial services to the presidency.

As I have already announced, the next step will be to create a complete centralized and more professional organization, in order to further reinforce the structure and to improve the operational workings of the WBF. This means to eliminate the structure and costs of the presidential office and reduce as far as possible the external supports to concentrate all the resources, human, technical and technological, in the Headquarters of Lausanne. We have already started the project, to be able to have the process completely ended and perfectly operative during the current legislature and before its end.

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January is in force the new Disciplinary Code, adopted in Chennai last September and Sentencing Guidelines for Zones & NBOs have been published. We are working now to the introduction of the Code of Ethic and to a Protocol of Coordination in juridical matters. On the beginning of January as well the Express Line for reporting unethical behaviors has been activate under the responsibility of the HLPC.

Our Medical Commission completed in Opatija 2015 the survey with selected players from the participating countries to analyze the attitude of bridge players towards medical substances connected with mental agility. The Commission obtained the publication of its work in one of the most prestigious medical magazine, remarking its scientific value, and is preparing a booklet which will be a sort of guideline for the health of the bridge players.

Concerning communications, since Bali 2013 we introduced a new element at the Championships, presenting daily films, interviews and a synthesis of the day. In addition added a Photo-Stream and published written interviews from the players and various personalities. This initiative enriched our communication system and was very well received. We have an active Facebook and Youtube presence, currently followed by nearly 2,000 who see the information posted there on a regular basis. Since Chennai 2015, maintaining the traditional Daily Bulletin, both in printed and electronical format, we introduced the new Online Bulletin for the Championship and we broadcasted online via Facebook eight matches every session.

We are now in contact with a professional person to try to define a cooperation in matter of communication, marketing and P.R. Of course we are still in a preliminary phase and nothing has been settled, but I am confident that we will be able to reach this goal. As you can well understand this will represent a true jump of quality both in terms of image and benefits.

It's not strictly connected with the communication, but I am very pleased to report that we defined a quadrennial agreement of partnership with Ourgame to organize a worldwide simultaneous contest and an online contest starting from next April.

In terms of development ,as you know, to help the youth, offering them some facilities participating to the WBF events, we created a specific Youth Fund for the youth activities and in addition to the income from the Pro Youth Simultaneous Tournament, we decided to reserve to this fund a percentage of the annual profit. In Chennai we decided to create a new "Developing Fund"

As you know and as I am never tired to repeat, our main challenge is the youth development. I am proud that many NBOs everywhere in the world take care of the Youth, but we have still a lot of work to do. We need to be convinced and strongly believe that this is the only way to guarantee a serene future for our beloved discipline.

I want to thank, once again, the Youth Committee, chaired by Ata Aydin, and the Kids Committee led by Sevinç Atay for the excellent job they are doing, as well Geert Magerman for his enthusiastic and dedicated job in the University field.

The marvelous news is that the Kids are today a fact and no more a simple dream. We had the first signal in Atlanta 2013, followed by the confirmation in Istanbul 2014 and Opatija 2015, passing through the remarkable success of the EBL event in Tromsø. This year in Salsomaggiore I am confident to have a great participation. From Europe have been already invited, in addition to Italy, France, Poland, Netherlands, Sweden, England and Israel(the first 6 of Tromsø and it seems that the other 6 are in expectance....). From abroad we have already invited Australia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia and USA. We are working to be able to offer them, in addition to the free entry, a subsidy, according to the number of teams that each NBO is qualified to send to Salsomaggiore.

Let me say that I consider a form of development also the introduction of new events which create new enthusiasm and new stimulation, giving space to an even greater number of players to attend, representing their own country, an international event. I believe that the participation in such an event and the related experience are the best propaganda for delivering the image of our discipline.

I am referring to the introduction in Wroclaw of the national mixed teams and the national open, women, seniors and mixed pairs. Radek Kielbasinski yesterday gave to you an excellent presentation of the event, underlining the sense of the participation and reporting the details of the organisation. I want just to add two things: firstly that in the Olympiad all the sport show the various category of their disciplines, and so I believe that is essential that in our Olympiad we show who we are and which are our specialties; secondly that all the affiliated NBOs, also those that for every reason cannot be represented by a team, can participate the event having just one pair and can finally say I was there.

Another aspect that in my opinion is strictly linked to the development concerns the consistence of our image and of our reputation at international level.

I am very proud to inform you that just yesterday I received from my friend Michael Bambang Hartono the marvelous news that Bridge has been admitted to the next Asian Olympic Games (organized every four years), which will be held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2018. This admission follows the acceptance of Bridge at the SEA Games which will be held in 2017 in Korea.

Another important fact happened some months ago when, for the first time in our history, we have been invited by the organisers of the Tokyo Olympiad 2020 to send to them an application to participate in the Games. Being only two places available and having to compete with other much traditional and popular sports, of course we did not have any chance to be selected, but what it was important, in my opinion, it was the invitation. Sending us the invitation, the Tokyo organisers recognised our dignity of sport federation as per all the others recognised by the IOC and this is, again in my opinion, an important sign.

As you know Roma is candidate to host the 2024 Olympic Games. The competition is very strong and it's absolutely not easy to win, but I am more than confident that in case Roma will be the host city we will have a great chance to be selected by the Organising Committee for one of the places at their disposition.

I remain at your complete disposal for any question or clarification.

Thank you for your attention.

Gianarrigo Rona  
WBF President