

## **Speech for the 7th EBL NBO OFFICERS' SEMINAR**

President Aubry,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to have this opportunity today to speak to you personally. All card players know that good organisation and smooth running allow them to devote their full attention to the game, in order to play the best possible hand. Germany is a well-regarded member of the European Bridge League and, in the past, was frequently able to present itself as a good and welcoming host for the sport of bridge. I have fond memories of the Champions Cup of the European Bridge League, which took place in Bad Honnef in November 2011.

Judging by the illustrious nature of those taking part in the conference, it would seem that you share my assessment. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome all the presidents and vice-presidents and members of the boards of directors from the different national federations. A very warm welcome to Berlin, to Germany.

It is important to me personally that all the countries in the European Bridge League enjoy taking part in events in Germany and feel at home during their stay here. I believe that bridge in Germany is becoming ever more established within society. In this context, I should mention the increasing number of press reports about bridge, its inclusion in school curriculums and in university sports programmes, as well as the membership of the European University Sports Association and the International University Sports Federation. I am pleased to observe that the bridge community is growing.

I see from the programme that, over the next three days, you will be discussing the future development of bridge in Europe and Germany. One central issue will be cooperation at national level with government bodies and the national Olympic organisations.

Membership of the Olympic organisations in particular is an issue dear to your hearts. Here in Germany, the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) is of the opinion that, of the mind sports, only chess should be a member of the sports confederation – and only because it has already been a member for so many years. According to the DOSB's statutes, every type of sport should have as its aim a certain characteristic moving activity by all players and the DOSB explicitly makes clear that it does not view this as applying to mind games.

Yet I do not believe that statues are set in stone. In Germany alone, 29,000 players are organised into the German Bridge Federation, with 405,000 involved at European level. This means that they have a fairly strong lobby and ability to exert influence.

I wish you much success with the upcoming discussions and, naturally, I am happy to assist you in achieving your aims, insofar as that is possible as a Member of the German Bundestag, and am happy to give you advice.

I hope that we have a pleasant evening, with interesting discussions, and would like to welcome you very warmly once again to Berlin.