

101st FAI ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE – RHODES

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

Dear Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As our President told you, this last year has been a year of significant advance and achievement in FAI. We have successfully executed the 2009 World Air Games bidding process; we have launched the Red Bull Air Race support contract. Thanks to Jeff Zaltmann of Flying Aces, who is filming here at the Conference, we have secured good media coverage of several of our major sporting events. We are making good progress on the establishment of a centralised data-base of FAI Sporting Licences. And we have again made very good progress in digitalising all our World Record and Championship archives, and making this information readily available on-line.

All this work is in addition to the routine daily functioning of the Secretariat, the volume of which many of you may not appreciate. Suffice it to say that the number of events on our Sporting Calendar is now several times higher than it was 10 years ago, thanks largely to the successful policy of certain Commissions of introducing World Ranking Lists of Competitors. This is an excellent thing, but of course each additional competition generates extra work for the Secretariat, if only in making the necessary data-base entry and collecting the sanction fee.

I mentioned the Sporting Licence database. I can show you how this will look (...). Any person who wishes to compete in an event on the FAI Sporting Calendar must hold an FAI Sporting Licence. These, naturally, 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. All we can do is to refer them back to the appropriate NAC. And not all NACs are always able to answer promptly. Now, all NACs will be able to up-load their Sporting Licence data-files (which can be in simple format such as 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.

We have made great efforts to ensure that the system is simple to use. By Jan 2008, by which time most NACs will have up-loaded their data, access can be granted by password to selected persons who need to know who holds a Sporting licence. 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. The workload this implies for NACs is minor – one or two emails per year should normally be enough - but the gains for contest organisers and FAI contest officials will be enormous.

If any NACs are considering modifying their administrative system for FAI Sporting Licences, I urge you to consult with the FAI Secretariat to ensure compatibility with this new system. Also, we would like NACs who are ready to up-load their data to do so in the coming weeks. I will be writing to all NACs on this subject very soon.

Last year, I spoke about the role of FAI Vice Presidents. I stressed the difference between being a country's representative to FAI, which is the role of the Head of Delegation here at the General Conference, and being a FAI Vice President, which means that you are a FAI official with primary loyalties towards the international federation. Of course, it is sometimes possible, and even desirable, for the same person to play both roles. But they are separate and distinct. Our Executive Board Member, Bengt-Eric Fonsell, has developed some ideas on how the role of Vice Presidents can be enhanced, and we will be writing to you soon on this subject. It's the FAI Vice Presidents who must ensure good communications between FAI and its members.

I would like to say a word about approval of FAI Awards, which is one of the FAI Vice Presidents' chief responsibilities. Each year, we honour people who have frequently devoted whole life-times to air sports and aviation. The decisions to approve awards are made by email vote of the FAI Vice Presidents. Often, for example when a NAC nominates a group for a Group Diploma, or an individual for a Tissandier Diploma, the decision is purely a Yes/No affair. In these circumstances, almost all Vice Presidents naturally tend to give the benefit of any doubt to the nominating NAC, so it is very rare for a nomination to be refused. Sometimes there are several candidates for one award. On these occasions, several rounds of voting are sometimes needed. But in either case, Vice Presidents have nothing concrete to base their decision on, other than their general knowledge and the NAC's citation.

It may be that the time has come for some preliminary screening to be carried out by a select group of senior people, who would then give advice on each nomination to the Vice Presidents. Your opinions on this question would be much appreciated.

Let me now report on the activities of the FAI, its Members, Commissions and Secretariat since the Centenary General Conference in Santiago (October 2006).

Membership

The FAI Membership in October 2007 (not counting this year's decisions) stands at :

Active Members :	80	(78)
Associate Members :	7	(8)
Temporary Members :	8	(9)
International Affiliate :	3	(3)

(Last year's figures in brackets)

Overall membership is stable, not growing.

World Championships

In 2006, **40** Championships were held in **17** different countries on three continents, with a total of **3 278** competitors. A total of sixty-seven (67) different member countries participated in these competitions, another record high (66 last year, also a record).

The total number of FAI Championships continues to rise steadily.

Of course, the numerical dominance of Europe has not changed, and will not in the foreseeable future. However, the beginnings of significant growth of air sports in Asia are becoming apparent.

FLIGHT SAFETY

191 fatalities were reported in 2006, as compared with 175 in 2005 and 339 in 2004 (approximately the same number of countries reporting). So things are not improving enough. We have a perplexing tolerance of a high attrition rate which is absent in other high-risk sports. It is our responsibility, especially through education, training and supervision to ensure that pilots fly safely. "Human factors" – that is things that can usually easily be avoided – are the cause of the great majority of fatal and serious accidents. Medical and airworthiness factors are insignificant by comparison.

WORLD RECORDS

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:

Steve FOSSETT (USA) absolute altitude - Open Class Gliders: 15 460 m

Vijaypat SINGHANIA (IND) - AX-15 hot air balloon altitude record: 21 027 metres

Stanislaw FUODOROFF (RUS) Airships - Absolute Altitude: 8 160 m

Nicolai OKHOTNIKOV (RUS) Turbojet amphibian (Beriev) - Speed over 500km course: 672.17 km/h

Diether MEMMERT (GER) 15m Gliders – Distance over 3 turn-points : 2 193.1 km

Klaus OHLMANN (GER) Open Class Gliders – Distance over 3 turn-points:

2 405.5 km

Klaus OHLMANN (GER) Open Class Gliders - Speed over 500 km O/R:

306.8 km/h

Jennifer MURRAY E-1 Flight over both poles

Andrew KEECH E-3 Autogyro Distance : 1414.64 km

The number of world records ratified has increased in 2005. Remember that 2004 was a year in which the figure was artificially inflated by a large number of claims associated with one round the world flight.

FAI STAFF

The total number of staff, including the Secretary General, is 5 full-time and one part-time (2.5 days a week). There have been no changes since the last General Conference.

The FAI staff remains very loyal, committed and hard-working and I thank them for all their support.

SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES

I would also like to pay tribute once more to our team of local volunteers. Jean-Claude Jolliet and Roger Barraud continue to do sterling work on digitalising our archives, and they have recently been joined by Mme Meyer, whose husband Marcel is on our paid staff. She is helping to introduce a numerical database retrieval system for our records, to make it much simpler to find a paper file that we need to consult. We frequently receive requests for information from historians, museums and press and media, and this new system will make it easier for us to respond promptly.

This website continues to grow, both in terms of its size and the number of visits. Most Commissions now have content managers with direct access to their pages, and this has resulted in improved topicality.

The new logos for Championships, FAI Members, and World Records are in active use, ensuring better visibility of the FAI brand.

As always, we have had our share of “fire-fighting”. Last year, I appealed to all involved to keep the Secretariat fully informed from the very start, as soon as a potential difficulty with a contest organiser or a member organisation was identified,

so that we can help give advice. In most cases, this has happened, but there have still been a few cases where the FAI Secretariat only became involved when the problem had already assumed significant proportions – by which time it is often too late for us to do anything to help. Please remember that the FAI Secretariat is here to help, not to hinder.

CONCLUSION

As the FAI President has told you, we are in a healthier position this year than last. We have two new major – albeit still fairly unreliable – sources of income, which should allow us to increase the capacity of the Secretariat to help Members and Commissions. And we have at least two companies seeking to obtain media rights to FAI's major events. I feel that during the last year we have established a good springboard for a successful future, thanks in no small measure to the indefatigable energy of the FAI President.

I said last year that I was confident that we were now on the right track and that we would be able to make major progress in the next couple of years. This year, I am even more confident, and I know that we shall have the full support of all our members in taking FAI forward in the years ahead.

I would like to close by thanking the FAI President and Board Members for their unfailing support, and I look forward to talking with many more of you this evening and tomorrow.

Max Bishop
Secretary General

13 October 2007