



Report from the FAI Environmental Commission to FAI General Conference 2007, Rhodes, Greece

The activities of the FAI Environmental Commission (EnvC) since the General Conference 2006 were multifold. Still the same objectives guide the activities of EnvC in that we are positively influencing air sport practitioners to apply environmental friendly approaches in their flying activities and that the majority of FAI representatives and member NACs promote environmental considerations in their internal and external communications.

Interaction with FAI Air Sport Commissions and FAI Executive Board

As a result of the continued communication and cooperation with FAI Air Sport Commissions and the FAI Executive Board, and the sharing of environmental considerations, four observers from Air Sport Commissions were present at the Annual Meeting of EnvC on January 20, 2007 in Frankfurt, Germany. It was also a special honour for EnvC to host the meeting of the FAI Executive Board at the same venue giving EnvC delegates, observers and board members the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas.

Another opportunity for such communication was the meeting of FAI Executive Board and FAI Sport Commission Presidents on June 2 - 3, 2007 in Lausanne. This meeting was determined by the decision on the previous day to perform the World Air Games 2009 in Turin. Consequently, many planning activities for the success of this event were initiated and this includes EnvC. We closely observe the activities of all FAI bodies towards this event and are available, should acute needs for environmental advice arise.

Current Projects of FAI Environmental Commission

FAI Standard for Environmental Management Systems (EMS) on Flying Sites

The development of an EMS standard for flying sites is still one of the top priority objectives of EnvC. Limited resources of EnvC, the obvious big effort on time and financial resources for the development of a comprehensive standard, and other tasks of EnvC delayed this project so far. Therefore, we now consider a simple, pragmatic approach. Rather than developing a new standard from scratch or translating and adopting/modifying the existing German standard (Sport Audit Luftsport) for FAI, EnvC plans to develop a few rules only which will allow flying sites to implement local or internationally adopted EMS standards. We hope to present a first draft of such rules at the General Conference 2007 in order to initiate discussion and coordination of the further development with Air Sport Commissions, CASI and interested NACs. In a step by step approach, we can then fine tune the EMS standard for flying sites.

Other Activities of EnvC

The Climate Change Debate

The steadily increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in our atmosphere due to combustion of fossil energy and the observed climate change effects over the past decades are seen by many scientists and politicians as related. They consider this as a major challenge for the future of human society. Many countries have already defined stringent goals for the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions and this has set the tune for alternative behaviors and technical developments.



CO₂ emissions are an important factor for commercial air traffic and it is foreseeable that air traffic will soon be subject of emission restrictions, e.g. increased fuel taxes, CO₂ emission trading schemes, etc. Commercial air traffic has recognized this and has started to adopt its business strategies accordingly. This is the essence of a conference on Sustainable Airport Management held in Madrid in June 2007 which I was able to attend. One of their strategies is the trade of certificates for climate neutral flights to passengers in support of projects for the generation and use of renewable energy to compensate for the consumption of fossil energy.

Fuel consuming air sport activities are not differentiated by the public or politicians from commercial air traffic and will therefore also be subject of the same restrictions. FAI or NACs will not be in a good position for exemptions from restrictions. The only good chance of air sports is the ability to react faster and to develop a wide range of alternatives. For example, why not applying the concept of climate neutral flights for air sports? When will the first certificates for climate neutral air sport flights be available?

Biosphere Reserves and other Nature Protection Preserves

At least in densely populated Europe new types of nature protection preserves have been established in recent years such as Natura 2000, Fauna-Flora-Habitat, and EU-Bird Protection Areas. Meanwhile such areas can cover substantial percentages of a countries territory. In accordance with harmonized EU regulations, EU countries now establish Biosphere reserves, following a global concept of UNESCO.

In contrast to traditional nature preserve areas with strict objectives on protecting wildlife, these new types of nature protection areas have less stringent objectives and the co-existence of human society and natural wildlife is acceptable with the goal just to maintain existing conditions. Unsustainable development, however, is controlled. In our opinion, the establishment of such nature protection areas can in general be supported as the protective objectives are balanced and leave room for the needs of residents. However, in detail there may be restrictions, e.g. for conducting sport in the natural environment. This may affect hang- and paragliders, but also balloonists who occasionally start or land in such areas. Maps delineating such protection areas should be checked in detail during the area definition process and also when conducting flights later on. In any case, only approved launching locations should be used.

Relation to IOC

High Flyers, FAI's book summarizing 100 years of sporting achievement in the air, describes the past and ongoing challenges in trying to make air sports an Olympic Sport. Nevertheless, IOC can be seen as a role model for FAI and with regard to environmental considerations, the guidance by IOC current publications and conferences towards environmental considerate developments for sports are valuable for air sports.