Address to the General Assembly of FMJD

Dear all,

The COVID-19 crisis has brought challenging times for all sports, also for draughts. During most of 2020 and up until now major tournaments needed to be cancelled or postponed. As a matter of fact, the world championship in Tallinn for which owe great thanks to the municipality of Tallinn and to the state of Estonia, is the first major tournament.

On the positive side we have seen a rapidly increasing interest in on-line playing and studying. As FMJD we need to promote such activities. But we need the physical tournaments as well, especially those under the umbrella of IMSA in China as they form a major part of our income. During an upcoming IMSA online meeting on the 29th of May we will learn more about the current situation in China and the chances to organize major events.

After my eight years of President of FMJD I was very happy to pass on the challenge to Janek Mäggi but my experience could still be used in the Board as Director of International Relations. For various reasons I have accepted to be a candidate again but not for the full four years but only for two. The most important reason, apart from my age, is that KNDB and my club in the Netherlands WSDV have agreed that we want to organize the world championships of 2023 in Wageningen, hometown of the most famous Life and Science University of the World: Wageningen University & Research. It looks like that these events can take place at the end of the summer. The application for these events is part of the agenda of the GA. When it is possible the organization will buy new electronic boards (DTG does not produce them anymore) for the event that can afterwards be given to participating federations who need such boards most.

The women's match between Tamara Tansykkuzhina and Natalia Sadowska caused a lot of unwanted havoc. Though arrangements in Moscow seemed in place to play the match there earlier this year, the organization appeared to be a scam and ended in a nightmare. It was the direct reason that our tournament director Jacek Pawlicki resigned with immediate effect. Later the match was picked up by Poland and they organized a match under excellent conditions. However, also there, challenges surfaced especially due to rules on world championships imposed by WADA, the World Anti-Doping Association. Due to the treason by RUSADA, the Russian Doping Agency, Russia was excluded from international sport events until the end of 2022. No hymns, flags etc. depicting Russia are allowed.

Mr.Pawlicki was informed about that by email first on the 23rd of April, and the organizers in Poland were informed the next day. The rest is unpleasant history with accusations and demands from Poland. A more detailed report is available on request.

Special times call for special solutions. Nobody could foresee that the world would be hit by a pandemic and the Board has the authority to act in such situation. Therefore, the Board took the decision to postpone the match for the World Title between Alexander Georgiev and Roel Boomstra until the end of this year. During the General Assembly we will certainly discuss the implications of these decisions and look forward to the future.

Our relations with China are very important. 40 Technical Referees there are waiting for their diploma's, but they were, apparently, refused because of the lack of language knowledge. Such knowledge, however, for such a function is not necessary. We need to find practical solutions for such challenges.

For the coming two years I look forward to a continued fruitful collaboration with our President Janek Mäggi. For draughts we need to keep in mind what we have written in our statutes namely that for draughts the main variant is on the 100 squares. Further emphasis on 64 should not be at the cost of 100 which is most popular in Western Europe and Africa.

Harry Otten

Director of International Relations