



THE INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE CHESS FEDERATION

ICCF General Secretary
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GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT ICCF CONGRESS – Järvenpää 2011

1. Introduction

From 2009 when elected during the midterm as the General Secretary, throughout 2010, and the first half of 2011, I have been kept quite busy keeping up with our energetic President, fine tuning membership and distribution lists, participating in the various commissions and committees, working on proposals, implementing Congress decisions from previous years, corresponding and informing delegates, officials, and players, and supporting and attending to the details of organizing the Congress.

2. Membership Matters

There are no recommendations to Congress for approval and granting of ICCF Membership to any National Federation for the upcoming Congress. While I received initial queries from two countries (Cameroon and the Philippines) interested in ICCF membership since last Congress, I never received any follow-up communications when I presented an initial membership form and an offer to assist.

As of this report, we have 59 active Member Federations in good standing, and 10 more who has been suspended for various reasons. Those 10 Member Federations who are suspended and will not have voting rights at the 2010 Congress are:

- Colombia
- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Turkmenistan
- Tunisia
- Venezuela
- Kazakhstan
- Panama
- Singapore
- Uruguay

The Financial Director is presently analyzing the books to determine if any Member Federations will be added to this list based on non-payment of dues for the requisite number of years.

3. Executive Board

Since last Congress, we have had the following changes to the ICCF Executive Board:

- Zone 4 Director – dismissed for cause **
- Marketing Director – resigned
- Services Director – dismissed for cause

These vacancies have placed additional burdens on the remaining Executive Board members to continue the roles and responsibilities of these vacated positions.

** Note, after an internal Zone 4 mid-year election, a replacement (Dinand Knol, RSA) was elected to the position of Zone 4 Director and member of the Executive Board.

4. Elections

ICCF will hold elections this year for the six ICCF Executive Board positions as well as the ICCF Auditor position. The 2-month nomination period closed on June 1, 2001

After verifying with the ICCF Auditor, Josef Mrkvička, I am pleased to announce the following nominations for the ICCF Executive Board and Auditor positions.

President

- Eric Ruch (FRA)
- Tunc Hamarat (AUT)

General Secretary

- Michael Millstone (USA)

Finance Director

- George Pyrich (SCO)

World Tournament Director

- Frank Geider (FRA)

Marketing Director

- No nominations received

Services Director

- Jean-Christophe Chazalotte (FRA)

Auditor

- Josef Mrkvička (CZE)

Because no nominations have been received for the Marketing Director position, the Executive Board is empowered to appoint a suitable candidate, once one is found and vetted.

I am presently soliciting eligible delegate voting members to determine (a) their attendance at Congress, (b) appointment of a designee, or (c) appointment of a proxy in respect to Congress voting. Having received several requests for clarification from our delegates, I can confirm that a Member Federation in good standing, not represented by any of the three methods listed above, may still participate in the ICCF Executive Board and Auditor elections by sending an e-mail from the delegate to the General Secretary and Auditor, received and confirmed before the voting takes place on Sunday, July 21, 2011.

5. Awards

As is usual, nominations will be presented to Congress for the award of Bertl von Massow medals in gold and in silver. Many congratulations to all the recipients!

6. Congress

First, I would like to thank our generous hosts of the Finnish Correspondence Chess Federation (FCCF Finland), for sponsoring and hosting the ICCF Congress. This is also a special event for the Finnish Correspondence Chess Federation who will be celebrating their 50th anniversary with us this year.

Our hosts have created and maintained an excellent website, replete with details about all aspects of the upcoming Congress. The website may be found at http://www.shakki.net/liitot/skl/iccf_2011_congress.html

My special thanks to Esko Nuutilainen and his Finnish team for providing our President and I all the information and assistance necessary to make this Congress a success. A special thanks also to Auno Siikaluoma for creating such an informative and well-maintained Congress website. I hope we can borrow the template for future ICCF Congresses.

I am sure, along with all attendees, we are looking forward to visiting the Land of the Midnight Sun. I am personally excited to venture close to the Arctic Circle again (especially in the summer). I lived in Alaska at 64 degrees, 28 minutes north for 3-years and Järvenpää is very close to that at 60 degrees, 28 minutes north. I am looking forward to tasting the world famous Finnish summer strawberries, experiencing a cloudberry, and comparing the taste of Finnish reindeer to the Alaskan reindeer. I am not so sure about *veriohukainen*, but am willing to try ☺.

7. Proposals

I have no new proposal this year, but would like to report on the status on my proposals from last year.

Special Leave Proposal

Background.

Special Leave was instituted to provide for players experiencing exceptional circumstances. Specifically, a player must claim he or she is suffering from an illness, natural disaster, or urgent

overseas business posting that requires an excuse from all ICCF play. By requesting special leave, the player is telling the Tournament Director (TD) that circumstances are so difficult that he or is unable to play correspondence chess and he or she requires special dispensation from the TD in the form of special leave.

Problem.

After an extensive EB review, two “problems” appear in the administration of special leave.

1. Each TD is vastly different in the interpretation of the special leave circumstances. Some will allow special leave for almost any request (such as a variable or unexpected workload in a job), including those not specifically mentioned in the rules, while others follow the rules exactly.
2. The very essence of special leave is that circumstances are so severe that a player is not able to continue any ICCF play. Yet, overwhelming evidence has shown that players are only applying for special leave in some tournaments, while continuing to play in others. This practice (whether considered intentional abuse or simple ignorance of the rules) defeats the purpose and intent of special leave. Please note that the TD is not at fault as he or she cannot check or enforce that a player will be on special leave in all tournaments.

Proposal.

1. Establish a central special leave administrative position (one or more trusted members) under the authority of the World Tournament Director. All requests for special leave will go through the office for consideration. Benefits would include the following: (a) Greater consistency in applying the rules of special leave. This will even the playing field and reduce subjectivity in approving or disapproving special leave, (b) Authority to review special leave activity of a player to ensure that 1. Special leave limits have not been exceeded and 2. Enter special leave in all active player tournaments (this can be done manually now and if approved, a request to automate the procedure could be added to the webserver enhancement list) and 3. Communicate to all TDs any actions taken. The office can also maintain a database of special leave activity similar to the player suspension list for historical and trending information.
2. As an alternative to the proposal above, I would propose the elimination of the special leave provision altogether and offer an additional 15-days of normal leave/vacation per year. This would put greater emphasis on players to properly manage their own time and plan for unexpected circumstances.

Status.

The special leave proposal was unanimously passed. The anticipated implementation date (fully automated on the webserver) was 1 January 2011. Unfortunately, due to some programming issues and the loss of our Services Director, automation was delayed for approximately one-quarter. Anticipating this might happen, the back-up plan (manual implementation) was implemented and this carried us forward until the webserver could be automated under the original specifications and requirements. In the second quarter of 2011, thanks to the excellent programming efforts of Martin Bennedik, we implemented the special leave process on the webserver. TDs had to make some minor changes to their tournaments and I created and distributed a short tutorial on how to make the changes. Almost all the TDs were extremely responsive, receptive to the changes, and supportive of the need to make centralized and consistent decisions regarding special leave.

From 01.01.2011 through 11.05.2011, during the period of manual implementation, 48-players applied for special leave. Of those, 42 were approved and 6 were denied. Reasons for disapprove were:

- Computer malfunction
- Going abroad for 5-months
- Problems with the placement of computers for analysis
- Duplicate request
- Computer failure (unable to access the Internet or send e-mail (yet sent request for Special Leave with no problem).
- One request required further clarification but the player never responded back.

After automation (mid-May through the writing of this report), we have received 21 request for special leave through the webserver feature and 4 requests were denied. Reasons for disapproval were:

- An ICCF Official requested special leave because of his or her increased workload in preparing for Congress. While I denied the request because it does not fit into the special leave requirements, I am extremely mindful to this situation. Delegates must know that many ICCF Officials are working year-round and their workloads increase greatly in preparation of Congress. Perhaps this might be a discussion point for the delegates to discuss.
- Duplicate request
- One student requested special lave because of school exam sessions (twice).

Congress Voting Procedure Proposal

Background.

At each ICCF Congress, there are approximately 30-50 votes on matters before Congress. Historically, there is some discussion, followed by a vote. Voting results have been recorded in the minutes as either a unanimous or a majority vote. Many Federations are unable to send a representative to Congress and thus, rely extensively on the comprehensiveness and thoroughness of the Congress Minutes. Occasionally, we may have a contentious issue with a split vote, but the minutes have not reflected how and which Federations have voted.

Proposal.

Other than votes for elected positions, which are secret, I propose that all votes in Congress be recorded, capturing each Federation's voting decision (yeah, nay, abstain, or not voting). I feel this extra information will provide all Delegates a better understanding of the Congress activities.

I do not anticipate any extra time to record votes that are unanimous, and I anticipate a slight delay (30-60 seconds) to record a vote accurately that has a split decision. As of this writing, there are only 32 Federations represented by delegates or proxies, so the tally time of split votes should be negligible. I feel this extra effort to provide this additional information outweigh any slight delays

in Congress proceedings and encourage Congress to consider and approve this proposal. Each vote will be recorded in the minutes and the voting tally provided in the Congress appendix.

Status.

After a 56% vote for approval, this voting recording scheme was put into place and voting records are now part of the Congress minutes. I received a number of comments from Member Federation delegates after publication of the draft minutes concerning this process and all were positive. Most of the comments mentioned the need to be more attentive (or present) during voting and better understanding the proposal before voting. In several instances, a delegate or proxy voted against a proposal put forth by their own Federation. I believe the intent to provide more transparency into Congress activities, especially for those not represented have been met.

Future Improvements.

One major improvement I looked into this year was the possible use of electronic voting. Each eligible member would be issued a unique wireless electronic voting device (about the size of a pack of cigarettes). During voting, a delegate need only press a button (yes, no, abstain) and the results would be instantly transmitted to the central computer, results captured in a database for later publication in the minutes, and the results displayed on an election results page. While the technology exists and I considered eight different proposals to my RFP, I could not find a rental price for the equipment and software that was cost-effective for our Congress. I will continue to look to other technology solutions to improve and streamline the voting in Congress.

Since we are still saddled with a manual recording system, I may resort to a polling system for those decisive issues. "Algeria", "Argentina", "Australia", followed by a "yes", "no", "abstain" for the voting member, or the sounds of silence (not present). This will allow me to not have to "walk the room" counting votes and afford me the opportunity to capture better and more accurate notes for the minutes. I personally feel there are too many abstentions (Meaning: "Even though I have been entrusted to represent my Federation, I choose to remain silent, not vote, and allow others to decide issues for me"). In the event of abstentions, I will gladly entertain entering into the minutes any reason you wish to provide for not voting on a particular proposal (as long as you provide it to me).

/s/

Michael Millstone
ICCF General Secretary