



International Correspondence Chess Federation

President's report to Congress

June 2011

Dear Delegates:

Next month, we will meet for the annual ICCF Congress that will be held in Jarvenpää, Finland.

I hope that most of you will be able to attend the Congress or if not, send a proxy: it is important that your ideas and proposals for the future of ICCF be represented and defended, especially in this election year.

I would like to thank all ICCF officials and volunteers for their dedicated work. You will receive all their reports that summarize the work done throughout this year since last October. Many subjects and proposals will be discussed in Finland and I would like to highlight some of them in this report (referring for more details to the Official's report)

- Executive Board
- Congresses
- World Championships
- ICCF Tournaments
- Working group on "Draws in modern Correspondence Chess"
- Webserver
- Finance
- ICCF Registration
- Website

This is just a grasp of the work done by all ICCF Officers!

Once again, I would like to draw the attention of all Member Federations that ICCF needs more volunteers.

I wish to see you all in Finland.

Amici Sumus.

Eric Ruch
ICCF President

1. Executive Board (EB)

Since last Congress, there have been a few changes in the Executive Board members.

Just two months after his appointment, the Marketing Director has decided to resign for personal reasons. Unfortunately no other candidate has been nominated by the Member Federations and even for the election that will be held in Finland, the position will remain vacant. If no candidate can be found, I will propose to Congress to consider a paid position, in a similar way ICCF is paying Martin Bennedik for the webserver development. We need to find a solution to this long lasting problem.

Unanimously the EB has dismissed two Officers that have been totally silent for months and did not perform their work. It is always sad to have to dismiss someone, but for the sake of ICCF, I had to propose such action and I have been supported by the whole EB.

Firstly, the Zonal Director Africa-Asia has been dismissed and Member Federations of the zone have elected Everdinand Knol (RSA) as the new Zonal Director. This year the Delegates will have the chance to read the report of the Africa-Asia zone and will be happy to see an increase in the zonal activities.

The EB has also dismissed the Services Director and decided that the election will be postponed till the Congress (time was not available for organizing election before Congress). The silence of the Services Director since last December was very detrimental to the timely progress of the server development and the new website. I will cover these points later in my report. It is fortunate that an ICCF commissioner, who has proved to be very efficient in his current duties, has volunteered for this position and, since there are no other candidates, you can be sure that Jean-Christophe Chazalotte (FRA) will be the right person to become the future Services Director.

Despite these necessary dismissals, I can also report that the work of the EB, Management Committee and Commissions / Committee has been performed in a very positive spirit and in true friendship. It is very positive that all EB members, for positions to be elected in Finland, are again candidates for another term!

It really tells me that they are confident about our future and ready to continue their hard work for the benefit of ICCF!

2. Congress

Another good sign of the support of the Member Federation to ICCF is the number of proposals the EB has received last December for hosting the ICCF Congress in 2011.

No less than four proposals have been submitted and I would like to thank the federations of Austria, Poland, South Africa, and Finland for the quality of the offers, and the time spent in preparing them and answering the questions of the EB. I am convinced that the efforts are not wasted and based on the discussions I have had with some Delegates, I am convinced that a future Congress will be held in one of those countries.

During the selection process, it became clear that the document containing the requirements of a Congress and the financial responsibility of the host federation as well as ICCF had to be updated to include the concept of “bare bone congress” presented last year by the General Secretary, Michael Millstone (USA).

The updated document will be submitted to the vote of the Delegates.

As you know, Finland has been selected and we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Finnish Correspondence Chess Federation at the same time as the 60th (Diamond) Jubilee year of ICCF.

The Congress program has already been distributed and you have seen that our Finnish friends have proposed a “full congress” without requiring the additional funds made available by ICCF – US, Europe zone and ICCF.

Therefore, we shall be grateful to the Finnish Federation for hosting this Congress and perpetuate a long established ICCF tradition.

3. World Championship

This year will be very unusual and I hope unique in the ICCF history: three world champions (in just more than six months) will receive their medals in Finland!

That is still the heritage of the long list of finalists we had in the past 5 – 10 years and the number of finals we had to start within a short period of time.

This year a new final (WC27) has been started this month with 17 players, but I am quite confident that the next one will only be started in 18 months from now according to plans voted in Leeds in 2009.

Last year we had still a record number of entries in the Candidates and with the World Tournament Director (WTD) Frank Geider (FRA) and the Title Tournament Commissioner (TTC) Marco Caressa (ITA), I have proposed to the EB to have 10 sections of 11 players with only the first place guaranteed for the final. It seems that this solution has been well accepted by the players (no major complaints have been received) and was the only possibility to let everyone play and remain in the frame of the maximum number of promotions to the final according to the scheme voted two years ago.

This year, we have seen a record number of entries in the Preliminary with 14 sections of 15 players with the two first players promoted to the semi-final stage (but this is still within the allowable limit). The semi-finals have been started this month with 13 sections of 13 players, just one more section as in 2010 but 5 more sections than in 2009.

The announcement of the Candidates has been distributed and they are schedule to start in September as usual now.

The Preliminaries of the Olympiads 19 Postal have been started in March with 24 teams (showing that there is still a great deal of interest in this way of sending moves). It has been decided to have 3 sections of 8 teams and in order to be able to achieve title norms, the tournament is a double round robin with 14 games per player.

This feature (double round team tournament) is not covered by the current Tournament Rules but has been previously used in ICCF tournaments. The Qualification Commissioner Neil Limbert (ENG) will make a proposal to Congress to include in the current Tournament Rules.

The Ladies Olympiad IX will start in September and due to the limited number of participants, there will be no preliminaries and the final will be played directly.

4. Tournaments

This year has been again very busy for all Tournament Offices and I would just mention a few of tournaments.

I have worked with many officers to finalize the **Tournament Calendar** that has been sent to all Delegates and is available for all players on the ICCF website. This calendar will be updated on a quarterly basis and will be guidance for the players to plan their tournaments. I hope it will be useful for everyone and would like any comments to improve it in the future.

The **Direct Entry 5 Year Anniversary** has been very successful: 485 players (including 5 GM, 29 SIM, 39 IM, 1 IGM, 3 LIM, 2 FIDE IM and 3 FIDE masters) from 50 countries are playing in 68 groups of 7 players.

I can also report that **4 new Member Federations have now joined the Direct Entry Program** at the beginning of this year, Poland, Italy, Switzerland, and Belgium.

Some very important tournaments are currently open for registration and I invite all federations to advertise them as much as possible on their website and magazines:

- **The Veteran World Cup 4**
- **The ICCF 60th Jubilee World Cup tournaments (server, postal and Chess960)**

The number of entries in these tournaments is also very promising thanks to the dedicated work of the Tournament Organizers.

Chess960 is already very popular amongst CC players and shall also become part of ICCF standard tournaments from next year on, within the Thematic Tournament Office of Leonardo Madonia (ITA). It is also increasingly popular in our Federations; three of the largest ICCF members (ENG, GER, USA) are currently organizing a chess960 team tournament for their players.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind to all officials that Andrew Dearnley (ENG) is receiving your applications for the ICCF 60th Jubilee tournaments for officials.
A nice way to play with your friends!

As decided by last Congress, we have discontinued some tournaments: the Money Prize Tournaments (Rapid and Blitz). They have not been very popular in ICCF but it was worth a try.

I have also to inform you that we have discovered a few frauds and I would like to thank the TDs / TOs that have reported to the EB: one fraud was detected in MPT tournaments and players that have suffered from that fraud have received their normal prizes.

Another fraud has been detected in GMN tournaments and appropriate sanctions have been taken and the cheating player has been suspended. I have also decided to suspend the free entries for GM and +2600 though Direct Entry (they can only enter through their National Federation) until a final decision is made by Congress (see the report of the Tournament Rules Commission for the proposed changes in the rules).

5. Working Group on draws in modern Correspondence Chess (CC)

During last year in Congress I have presented my concern about the increasing number of draws in the modern practice of CC and I have indicated some possible ways to change that situation (+3 points for a win +1 point for a draw, change the tie breaking rules, change our rating system).

A working group, led by Gianni Mastrojeni (ITA) has been working through the year and will present its proposal to the Congress.

6. Webserver

Most of ICCF tournaments (but also zonal tournament, member federation tournaments) are now played on the server.

In 2009 and 2010 we have had a record number of tournaments played on the server (and I expect 2011 to be another record year) and the number of players is steadily increasing.

Last month, the server has registered his 10000th player!

Increasing interest has also been noticed in the services provided by ICCF ratings. After the Czech Republic, France is the second federation that will transfer the national rating to the server and use only ICCF ratings.

Despite the silence of the Services Director shortly after last year's Congress, the server development tasks voted by the Congress will be implemented before our meeting in Finland (nevertheless we had to hire external experts to test the new features before they can be safely implemented on the server):

- Date and time display improvements
- Support for the 40 days rule
- New event list improved
- Chess960
- Notifications to tournaments directors for abandoned and unfinished games
- Automation for tournament entries
- Improvements for ratings (e.g. active inactive players,...)
- Improved handling for player changing countries
- Security improvements
- Support for inactive countries
- Cross table improvements
- Special Leave Office implementation.

A few items (such as support for nodes) have been postponed after Congress.

I will lead a Services Committee meeting in Finland just before Congress to review the status of the 2011 plan and prepare the proposals for the 2012 plan that will be presented and voted by Congress.

The webserver is ICCF main asset and needs to be continually improved in areas such as tournament automation to help TOs in setting large tournaments on the server, streamlining the Direct entries with a better interface to Paypal payment, reviewing the user manual, FAQs, on-line help, supporting the main pages in multi-language, improving the general design of the server...

7. Finance

The increasing number of players and tournaments has increased ICCF profits in the last two years and the tournaments fees have been reduced in 2011 by 20% to 30%.

This will be helping Member Federation to attract new players!

The ICCF finances are healthy and the Financial planning for the next four years that I have prepared with the help of General Secretary, Michael Millstone (USA) and the Finance Director, George Pyrich (SCO) demonstrate that we have the financial resources for continuing our server developments and future marketing tasks.

8. ICCF Registration

In my last year report to Congress, I have stressed out that ICCF registration was a critical task to be completed as soon as possible and the Congress has supported unanimously this proposal. Subsequently Jean-Christophe Chazalotte (FRA) has been appointed EB Legal Counsel in charge of preparing the project of registration (As a professional judge, he has all the necessary qualifications for such a task).

I refer to Jean-Christophe's report for the subtle details of the process.

The main tasks was to find the best way to register ICCF taking into account all the complexity of the international laws governing association, money, taxes, liabilities,

We have had several discussions with experts, lawyers, judges (and thanks to Jean-Christophe free of charge for ICCF!) to find out the best possible solution on which we have based the proposal that will be submitted to the Delegates.

This proposal foresees to register ICCF in Switzerland (the most favorable laws and where the risk of taxations of the current ICCF assets is the lowest) but ICCF needs a "physical" seat there. I would like to thank, Ulrich Baumgartner (SUI) and the Swiss Federation who have accepted to host ICCF in the seat of the Swiss Federation.

The necessary documents "Seat Convention" have been prepared and approved by the Swiss Federation and the EB and ready to be signed in Finland should the Congress approve them.

In order to be fully effective, changes in the Statutes are required before registration in Switzerland. Since the registration is a complex and time consuming process, that needs to be renewed each time the Statutes are modified, the idea is to let in the Statutes what is absolutely necessary to be in the Statutes and have appendices (that are not part of the Statutes) that contain all operating procedures (such as the existing Electoral Procedures that are not part of the Statutes themselves)

The final step will be to create "Working Office(s)" for instance in France, where the accounts will be and the daily operations of ICCF will be done. The Working Offices can be more easily closed and moved to another country, depending on the nationality of the President for instance, than changing the country where ICCF is registered.

When all this will be complete, we will be able to show to banks, Paypal, tax offices, ... the necessary documents proving the legal existence of ICCF

9. Website

The progress of the website has once again been delayed, this year by the silence of the former Services Director and web designer that he had hired for redesigning the new website.

Clive Murden (AUS), ICCF webmaster, has taken the design as it was in March, and still continues to work on it. I expect that the major part of the work be completed before the Congress and that I can present you the look of the new ICCF website.