



The President's report

FIG Council meeting - St. Petersburg, May 2019

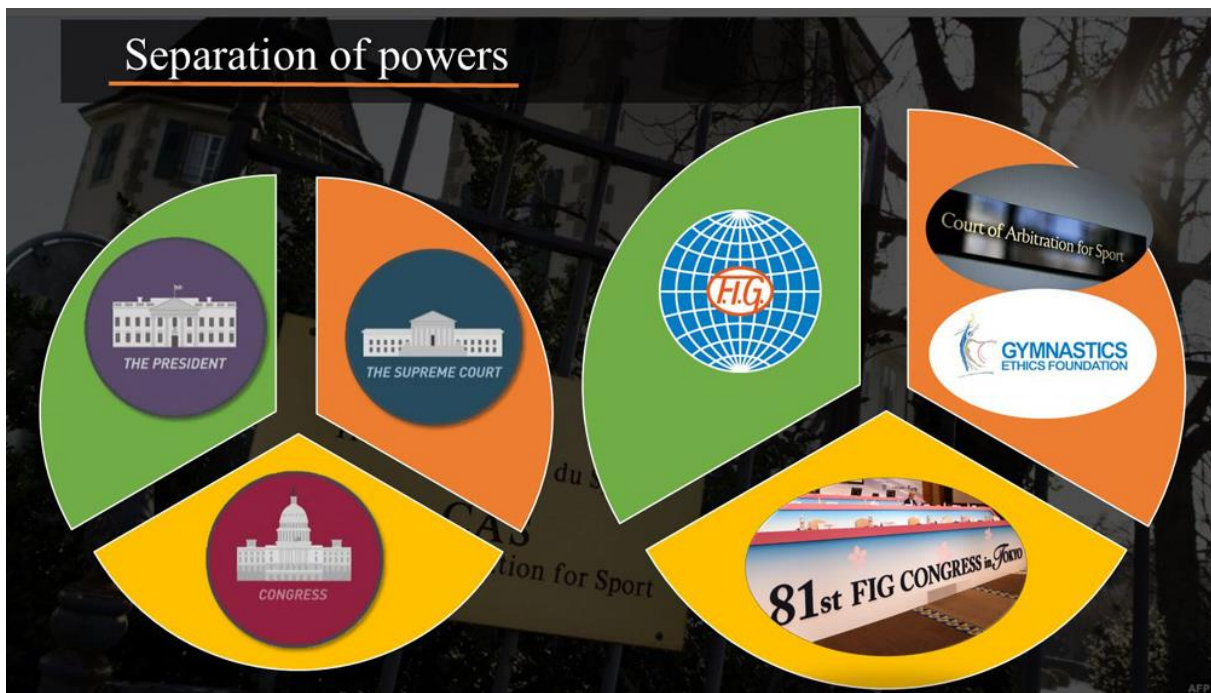
Dear all,

I would like to share with you the main points of the report that I presented to the members of the FIG Council in St. Petersburg, Russia, at the beginning of May.

1. Respecting the separation of powers

We were faced with an uncomfortable situation with regard to the bids for the 2023 Artistic Gymnastics World Championships. Let me explain the thread of events. On the one hand, the FIG sent out an official communication on 22 June which cited 30 November as the deadline for the submission of bids. On the other hand, the FIG sent a bidding questionnaire to the Belgian Gymnastics Federation and Japan Gymnastics Association in which "mid-December" was mentioned as the deadline. This choice of phrase, "mid-December", caused an interpretation problem: the Belgians interpreted it as meaning 15 December, while the Japanese took it to mean until 23 December.

The Belgians argued that JGA's application was not admissible because it had been sent after the deadline. The Executive Committee, at its February meeting, discussed this complaint and decided that the Japanese bid should be accepted. The Belgian federation, unhappy with the decision made by the EC, responded by referring the matter to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). I think what Belgium did was quite normal, it is entirely within their rights.



In my view, ideally, every organisation should respect the separation of powers between three branches. The FIG Congress holds the legislative power and the FIG office the administrative power while judicial power is in the hands of the Gymnastics Ethics Foundation and CAS. The national federations have the right to turn to CAS or the Ethics Foundation and no one should prevent them from exercising such a right. The President and the EC must protect the rights of our federations.

CAS ruled in favour of Belgium, and Japan, to fully respect this decision, decided to officially withdraw its candidature. As FIG President, I am not happy with the CAS decision, which went against that of our EC, but since Japan has withdrawn its candidature, there is no need to argue any further. The FIG must respect the decision CAS has made.

The Belgian Gymnastics Federation and Japan Gymnastics Association went to great lengths to present their bids. They are both victims of this case and as FIG President, I would like to present our sincere apologies to both federations. I have asked the FIG office to always try its utmost to understand the position and situation of the national federations. And I believe that this mistake will not be repeated under the new Secretary General, Nicolas Buompane.

2. Understanding difficulties on the ground

After the EC meeting in February, I visited Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa together with Nicolas Buompane, in his new role as Secretary General, and Tseko Mogotsi, the Development Officer for Africa. For me, it is important that the Secretary General does not just stay in his office but rather gets out in the field to understand the reality of the situation that developing federations face, and that – through his own eyes and ears – he sees and hears about their difficulties. The development programmes that Tseko has proposed are adapted to the level of each country. By taking advantage of my position as an IOC member, meanwhile, I was able to meet more easily with the sports ministers and presidents of the National Olympic Committees, which enabled us to get the support of governments.



Meeting with gymnasts training at the Physical Education and Sport Faculty in Maputo, Mozambique

3. Promoting Gymnastics as a basis for all sports

One day, the Minister of Sports of a small African island, Sao Tome and Principe, came to the FIG office to say that his country wished to join our the Federation. They wanted to promote Gymnastics because they had heard that "Gymnastics was the basis for all sports". This minister's wish was that all children should learn the basics of Gymnastics – not that they do Artistic, Rhythmic or Trampoline Gymnastics. This is a sign that, little by little, our policy is beginning to have a ripple effect.

We tend to focus too much on Artistic, Rhythmic or Trampoline Gymnastics. Of course these disciplines are our showcase for the development of the sport, yet while many of us did Gymnastics at school, this is no longer the case in many countries anymore. The Gymnastics we used to do at school, with a few small differences, looks like Gymnastics for All but today it is the Gymnaestrada which occupies the central space in the Gymnastics for All. We must work towards restoring an environment that encourages everyone to do Gymnastics, in every country around the world, as used to be the case in the past. To this end, I plan to set up a working group to promote a plan of action.

4. Developing Parkour as Urban Sport

Parkour World Cups have been held successfully in Chengdu, China, and then Hiroshima, Japan, where it formed part of FISE, the Urban Sports Festival that attracted a crowd of over 100,000 people over three days. Some 600,000 visitors are expected for the next FISE in Montpellier, France, into which the third Parkour World Cup will be incorporated. Urban Sports are booming. You just have to look at the advertising world. Companies do not use classic sports for their campaigns, but rather it is Urban and Beach Sports that get their attention.



Parkour World Cup in Hiroshima, Japan

I think this phenomenon will only grow further in the future. Every international federation is in the process of adapting to this evolution and a new discipline is fast becoming very much an essential asset for all. Urban sports are found in Cycling with BMX, in Basketball with 3x3, and in Volleyball with Beach-volley – not to mention Skateboarding and Climbing. And in

Gymnastics, we have Parkour. All the smiles that I saw on the faces of the young people during those World Cups deepen my conviction about the future potential of Parkour.

There are still areas for improvement, however, starting with the education system, which must be one of our priorities.

5. Being a model for gender equality

The IOC has conducted a survey on gender equality among the international federations and the FIG ranks fourth in terms of female Committee chairs. This is a major breakthrough that is worth highlighting. Gender equality is not only a duty but a necessity. As an organisation, we will not be able to continue to operate in the coming years if we do not respect gender equality. In the wake of the Council, the FIG organised a first Women in Gymnastics Leadership Forum, which brought together 40 women from all continents and with different backgrounds. The feedback we received is excellent and I hope that this kind of forum will prove to be a source of ideas to many.



Leadership Forum for Women in Gymnastics