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|  | **International Correspondence Chess Federation** |
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|  | **ICCF Congress 2020**  **Virtual**  **October 5, 2020** |
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**Greetings ICCF Delegates, Officials, and Friends,**

No need to belabour the obvious, but the face-to-face ICCF Congress was cancelled this year. The Scottish Correspondence Chess Federation put in an enormous effort into planning the 2020 Congress. All we can hope for is that things return to a semblance of “normal,” and we can entertain a face-to-face Congress in Scotland in 2021. The Executive Board is also exploring several virtual hosting options should we have a face-to-face Congress while still addressing concerns of travel of participants from around the world. Time will tell …

Numerous proposals were submitted (see attachment for voting records), and despite 100% online voting and no use of proxies, we had the highest participation rate of Member Federations in 30+ years. The Executive Board/Management Committee is busily implementing those proposals approved by Congress.

**Message from Our ICCF President**

Dear ICCF Delegates, Officials, and Chess Friends,

For the first time since 1990, no ICCF Congress will be organized this year.  Whereas three decades ago the Congress was only organized every other year, we had planned to meet in Scotland this summer. The pandemic situation due to the COVID-19 combined with the lockdown imposed in many countries and the disruption of the airline traffic made no other choice than to cancel the ICCF 2020 Congress planned to be held near Glasgow. My sincere thanks go to the Scottish Federation and especially to Gordon Anderson, who has spent a lot of time preparing this Congress.  I hope that all these efforts will not be wasted and that ICCF will meet in Scotland soon. Our annual meeting was not only the week during which the Delegates voted new proposals and discussed the future of ICCF but the occasion to meet friends, to play chess, to collect titles and medals ― all activities that the social distancing will prohibit this year.

Let us hope that the pandemic will be behind us next year and that we will be able to meet face to face during the 2021 Congress.

In honour of all chess players who have been affected by the COVID-19 disease, ICCF has announced a unique one-off event, the “ICCF Lockdown Open.”  This event has welcomed players who are currently unable to play OTB chess because of national lockdown as well as well-established correspondence chess players.  For this first time, a large open played on the server will use the Silli system and the Triple Block time control, which is sure to be seen much more in the future ICCF opens. I would like to thank all correspondence chess players who have entered this event (more than 650 entries have been registered) as their entry fees will be donated to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for the World Health Organisation (​3.750€ will be donated by the Member Federations and the ICCF).

In 2021, ICCF will celebrate his 70th anniversary, and several tournaments will be organized to celebrate this platinum Jubilee! World champions, elite players, officials, and correspondence chess players from all over the world will have a unique opportunity to play in traditional chess as well as in Chess960. We are convinced that every player will find the right tournament to celebrate our anniversary.

In 2019, ICCF will benefit from a positive financial year with a surplus of about 7.000€ resulting from lower expenses than budgeted while maintaining our efforts in the development of the server and the distribution of cash prizes to the players. As you know, Jan Vosselman (NED) has decided to resign, and I would like to thank him for serving ICCF as Finance Director (FD) after the sudden passing of George Pyrich (SCO). The Executive Board has been considering nominees for the position.  Please expect further information and a request for mid-term voting by this Tuesday.

In 2020, ICCF will surely receive help from another positive fiscal year with a budgeted surplus of about 15.000€ due to the savings resulting from the cancellation of the Congress in Scotland.

On a more positive side and based on the financial health of ICCF I have agreed with Jan to propose to the Delegates to reduce the fees of the ICCF tournament (see proposal 2020-13) which, if adopted will impact the financial result of ICCF by about 5.000€ (assuming that the lowering of the fees will not result in an increase in the number of entries, which is a cautious assumption). This reduction will help the Member Federations and the players, especially to those who cannot afford the current level of our tournament fees.

I consider this proposal as a first step, and if adopted this year by the Delegates, I intend in coordination with the FD elect to propose further entry fees reduction in the coming years, probably up to 10.000€ yearly.

This may result in some financial losses if not totally covered by the increase of incomes, but ICCF can afford it.  The accumulated funds in the ICCF savings account and in the investments will reach 200.000€ by the end of the year, and I do not see any reason to maintain it at this peak level.

During the last 4-5 years, the yearly budget of 20.000€ for the server development has proved to be sufficient to pay the necessary implementation of the congress decisions as well as a number of priority tasks (it should be noted by the Delegates that we are also limited in our development efforts by the available time of the Officials who are all only working on a voluntary basis).

I ask the Delegates to vote the next year budget of 20.000€ for the server development.

Austin Lockwood (WLS), ICCF Services Director, and I will now focus more specifically on player-oriented development to enhance the customer experience.

A few years ago, ICCF introduced the online voting system to help those Delegates unable to travel to the congress venue to express their views and voting rights. This system will prove its usefulness, allowing us to follow the ICCF democratic process even without organizing a face-to-face meeting and with as few perturbations as possible on our future developments.

Although all proposals are important, some of them will have a major effect on the future of ICCF. The possibility to use the Triple Block time control system as an official option for our standard tournaments will be a major step in ICCF modernization, as our current time control system has not changed in nature since the golden ages of the postal era and we need to prepare the future of ICCF.

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail,” Benjamin Franklin.

Delegates, please remember that online voting will start on July 8 and end 2-weeks later at the end of July 28.  Fingers crossed, we should have the results soon after, and we can get started on implemented Delegate approved changes and enhancements.

I sincerely hope that the current pandemic crisis will be over next year, and I expect to see you all during the ICCF Congress in 2021.

Eric Ruch

ICCF President

**Membership Activities**

Of concern were three Member Federations:

1. Chile – Chile (CHI) was several years behind on the membership dues. After numerous communication attempts with no response, ICCF communicated to Chile that if their payments were not brought present, they would be subjected to ICCF dismissal at the next Congress. Full payment arrived shortly thereafter.
2. Cape Verde (CPV) was also several years behind in their membership dues. Much like the message to Chile, at once afterward, full payment was proffered along with a promise to better engage in ICCF activities. For 2020, Cape Verde cast zero votes.
3. Venezuela – earlier this year, Venezuela went on a tear, starting numerous tournaments. Income went up but also did the amount owed to ICCF. As the amount owed quickly climbed past 5.000 EUR, ICCF took notice and collaborated with the National Delegate to set up a payment plan. Several payments were made but then stopped, still leaving an unreasonable amount of payments in arrears. The Executive Board had several ongoing discussions and decided to temporarily suspend Venezuela (no new tournaments organised, no internal entries, and a proposal to withdraw the Member Federation is the arrears are not satisfied). Several Venezuelan players have been inquiring as to why the Federation has been suspended, but to preserve the obligation to not interfere in internal matters, the response has been, “please check with your National Delegate.”

**Mid-Term Election**

After the voluntary departure of Jan Vosselman as Finance Director, ICCF conducted a mid-term election for a replacement. With a unanimous vote, Dr. Ferdinand Burmeister is now our new finance director and member of the ICCF Executive Board. Welcome aboard!

**Documents and Reports**

All documents and reports relevant to the 2020 Congress may be found here:

<https://www.iccf.com/message?message=1346>

All proposals voted on for the 2020 Congress may be found here:

<https://www.iccf.com/Proposals.aspx?id=73>

For a detailed list of every proposal and how each Member Federation delegate voted, please see the attached spreadsheet.

**New titleholders (GM, SIM, IM, LGM, LIM, IA)**

Our Qualification Commissioner, Uwe Staroske, and his team has completed the list of titleholders for 2020. Please refer to the attached “ICCF Titles – 2020” spreadsheet.

Regards,

Michael Millstone

ICCF General Secretary