

Dear participants of the 75th FIDE Congress!
Dear delegates of the General Assembly!
Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the FIDE Presidential Board and the leadership of the International Chess Federation I would like to welcome you on this hospitable Spanish land, in sunny Calvia, center of the Balearic islands. First of all, it is my pleasure to express our most sincere gratitude to the Spanish authorities, government of the Balearic islands, the municipality of Calvia, Spanish Chess Federation and the Balearic Federation as well as the Social Service and Sport Maya Institute, Gran Casino Mallorca, bank SA Nostra and all the sponsors and volunteers who contributed to the organisation of the 36th Chess Olympiad and the 75th FIDE Congress.

We have once again received evidence that Spain is one of the leading chess centers on the Earth, having organised the largest forum at the highest level.

Dear delegates!

The Agenda of the General Assembly contains a wide range of the issues, the major part of which has already been discussed at the Executive Board meetings, which has made some recommendations.

During the period after the previous 74th Congress, we have carried out sizeable amount of work, I would like to draw your kind attention to some of them:

1. Finance: As promised, I have transferred to the FIDE account an amount of 500, 000 USD. Unfortunately, in business some things do not depend on us and I was counting that I would be able to fulfil my obligations earlier, but the transaction which allowed me to transfer this amount to FIDE, had been fulfilled recently. Once again, I would like to underline, that the arrears have not been my personal expenditure, however I did make a promise to cover these expenses and I always keep my word.

To date, the funds in the FIDE account total to about 1, 2 mln Swiss Francs. Financially, our situation has been much better than during previous years. It is necessary to discuss and come forward with the clear idea how these means have to be spent, and which projects and Committees need immediate financial injections.

I also would like to note also, that the situations with the Federations and their arrears also improved and our expenses are becoming less, while the FIDE Secretariat has also improved its functioning.

2. World Championships: You are aware that this year we managed to successfully organise both World Chess Championship and Women's World Chess Championship in Tripoli and Elista respectively. In 2003, we have noted the interest of Georgia regarding the Women's event. However, following some important political changes in this country the holding of the tournament in Tbilisi proved impossible. Then the Head of Adjara A. Abashidze expressed his readiness to step in. The agreement was signed on 15 April, after which the situation in Adjara has worsened, where a civil war was about to break. The Georgian Minister of Sports informed FIDE of their inability to guarantee participants' security. Kindly note that the FIDE promptly reacted to this, and I travelled to Georgia myself, together with Deputy President G. Makropoulos, Vice President Z. Azmaiparashvili and my assistant B. Balgabaev, where we met with the Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili in Tbilisi and then with Mr. A. Abashidze in Batumi, where the fate of the Championship was discussed during 4 hours. The decision to transfer the Championship from

Batumi to Elista during the same dates, was its outcome. The decision was based on the following criteria:

- Elista has all necessary infrastructure to organise chess tournaments.
- Elista also is a seat of our well-prepared technical team, who is able to organise the Championship in a very short period of time.
- Many participants have the experience of playing in Elista and have very high evaluation of this venue.

However, the largest advantage was the kind consent of the sponsors of the event, should it have taken place in Batumi, to transfer it to Elista. On behalf of FIDE, I would like to warmly thank Mr. Abashidze and his sponsors for their invaluable support in the organisation of the Women's World Chess Championship, which was a great success.

World Chess Championship in Tripoli.

As you are aware, our knockout World Championships have been organised in various continents: Europe (Groningen/Lausanne 97-98, Moscow- 2001-2002), America (Las Vegas 1999), Asia (Delhi-Teheran 2000).

That is why we felt that we should not leave out the African continent in this respect., In this respect, I would like to note the initiative of the Mediterranean Chess Association led by Eng. Mohammad Al Gathafi and African Continental President N. Elhaj, who have launched an active campaign to bid for the organisation of the World Championship in Tripoli, Libya. Their local organisers, National Libyan Olympic Committee have done everything possible to organise the Championship well. Libya came forward with a special announcement that all participants of the Championship that the entry visas shall be issued at the airport upon arrival. I would like to underline that this was about the entry visas only for the participants. You would also recall that we used to have some problems in respect of the visas in our earlier events. In 1999, one Syrian and one Iranian player could not get visas and failed to play in the Las Vegas World Championship, and other players really went through a lot of difficulties while obtaining them.

It is a pity that now some players are involved in political games and insinuations. One of the participants, GM Vadim Milov from Switzerland, even filed a suit against FIDE, after having failed to come to Tripoli. I personally would like to note that the Libyan Leader Colonel Moammar Al Gathafi was personally supervising the issue of Milov's visa and did his best to ensure that Mr. Milov comes to Tripoli and I also sent him a letter where I informed Mr. Milov of my readiness to postpone his game of the 1st round, same measure which was undertaken in the case with GM Topalov, and even cover Mr. Milov's airfare. The main problem, however, was that Mr. Milov violated the deadline for the passports submission in one week, having sent his passport on 7 June, instead of 30 May. Vice President M. Sand will brief the delegates on this issue.

Nevertheless, both Championships were organised successfully and I would like once again congratulate new World Champions, Antoaneta Stefanova of Bulgaria and Rustam Kasimdzhanov of Uzbekistan.

Now we are facing a task to organise the match between World Champion and the leader of the FIDE Rating List GM Garry Kasparov, in accordance with the Prague Agreement. Now I would like to tell you in short how the preparations are going on.

3. Reforms in FIDE. I have already mentioned that during last year, we have undergone some important changes. We have transferred our offices to Athens, we have improved our management of the Secretariat, which has become more productive (we can even feel this from the size of the Agenda) and our financial situation has become healthier. But of course we have a lot more to do in the future. First of all, it is high time our FIDE Handbook had been revised. This

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corresponds to the spirit of the time and all the changes which are taking place in our life. The FIDE Handbook is also in the spirit of the FIDE democratisation and the increase of the professionalism in the activities of our Federation. All the proposals regarding the changes in amendments in the Handbook shall be published on the FIDE website and all those who wish to get acquainted with them, are kindly invited with their comments and proposals. Messrs. Leong and Sand will report in the details about this issue.

Other important issues I would like to draw your kind attention:

- This year FIDE is celebrating its 80th anniversary, therefore I would like to congratulate all delegates of the Congress and all your National Federations and all those who love chess, with this important date and wish all of you all the best.

- The detention of Robert Fischer, 11th World Champion, in Japan. I have already sent an open letter to the US President in support of Mr. Robert James Fischer. I think that such a gesture would be necessary on behalf of our Congress, in order to enlarge the actions in support of this chess legend.

- This year, FIDE and the Runix Technologies Ltd started their cooperation in the mobile chess tournaments with the help of sms. Currently, Russia is the first country, where a system Mchess-club has been launched. About 40 million people, mobile telephone networks subscribers can regularly play chess using mobile phones. There is a technology for the mobile chess tournaments and some pilot tournaments were organised. General Assembly is invited invited to approve the regulations for such tournaments and the rating calculations. From next year large scale international tournaments are expected to start, with the help of the sponsors. National Federations are kindly invited for the cooperation in this respect in their countries.

- 2004 is the year of the start of our project – FIDE Trainers Academy in Berlin. I consider this sphere to be extremely important as this will enable us set necessary standards and criteria for the trainers' activities. I would like to thank the German Chess Federation for their active help in this activities.

- We all noted coming into existence of the Association of the Chess Professionals. In this connection, I would like to note that FIDE would be open for the cooperation with all organisations and institutions that are ready for a constructive dialogue, promoting further development and popularisation of chess. However, we would oppose any structure, escalating the confrontation within the chess world.

In conclusion, I would like to note that despite huge amount of work which we have already carried out, we have even more in front of us, which we have to fulfil altogether in joint efforts. It is necessary to finalise real unification of the chess world in accordance with the Prague Agreement, to work more actively in the field of attracting sponsors for our tournaments, also to pay special attention to the Chess in Schools programme and of course, continue our help for the CACDEC countries. A separate issue is the programme of actions in relation to the next World Championship cycle. I am sure that our two days will be very productive.

Gens Una Sumus
Kirsan Ilyumzhinov
President

