

Chess in Schools Commission Meeting

Tallinn, 3 October 2013

Attendance:

Chairman and Secretary: Ali Nihat Yazici (TUR), Kevin O' Connell (IRL)

Councillors and Consultants to the Chairman: Uvencio Blanco (VEN), Alexander Kostyev (RUS), Beatriz Marinello (USA), Geoffrey Borg (MLT), Sevan A. Muradian (USA), Special Advisor on Higher Education: Susan Polgar (USA)

Continental Coordinators: Lakhdar Mazouz (ALG)

Members: Jerry Nash (USA), Hadi Karimi (IRI), Charles Moura Neto (BRA)

Observers: Hans Pees (DGT Projects) Stephen Kisuze (UGA), Lewis Ncube (ZAM), Herman Hamers (NED), Adam Dzwonkowski (POL), Allan Herbert (BAR), Zhu Chen (QAT), Shaker Al-Afoo (BRN), G. Luxman Wijesuriya (SRI), Russell Smith (TTO), Sandra Maria Guisso (BRA), Inaganti Amarnath (IND), Tshenolo Maruatona (BOT), Fidel Gonzales (VEN), Mahdi Abdulrahim (UAE), Jan Berglund (PLW), Mwinde Muchimba (ZAM), Jaan Ehvest (EST)

Chairman **Ali Nihat Yazici** opened the meeting. He referred to the general acceptance of CiS and expressed his thanks for the help and appreciation received from federations. He went on to restate the principles behind the main approach of CiS :

- A social project, not to generate Grandmasters but with a main focus on primary schools with the aim to introduce chess to young children to help their education.
- CiS works to get chess introduced in those primary schools by the schoolteachers who already work there – they are the people who know best how to teach young children ; they already have the necessary pedagogical background.
- CiS always works through the national chess federations, never bypassing them to work directly with private institutions.
- As a personal contribution, based on my experience in Turkey, CiS is not something new, but the innovation is to use CiS as an input to federations to generate income for them. It is very important that there should be a benefit for our members – the national chess federations. We are not UNICEF, UNESCO or the Red Crescent to make donations, we are FIDE.

2011-2012 Rosneft sponsorship was very important to us. Our 2012 Annual Report gives details of that sponsorship and the work that we carried out with 49 federations to the end of that year.

2013 Rosneft sponsorship could not continue but the President, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, is working and we are hoping for good news soon. However, we have not stopped working and

we have continued with additional countries, including Belgium, Iran, Italy, Mauritania and Thailand. For the rest of the year, we are planning a conference workshop in Al-Ain after we get conformation from the organizers of the World Youth Chess Championships.

2014 We are planning 4 seminar/workshops, one in each continent. In each one, we will be searching for local solutions according to local differences in educational systems, timings, involvement of different ministries and so on.

Magazine: This weekend sees the distribution of our 55th Premium magazine and 21st basic (free) magazine. Altogether, we have produced more than 500 pages. We think this material can help a wider audience and in 2014 we intend to make this a single magazine with free distribution to all members and to all federations.

I would like to express my thanks to all Councillors, Members and Advisors, with special thanks to Uvencio Blanco, Alexander Kostyev and Susan Polgar. Surely, the success of the Commission is based on the great work and assistance of our Executive Secretary Mr Kevin O'Connell. Now Mr Kostyev, President of ISCU, would like to tell you about a great chess activity including chess in school next February.

Alexander Kostyev referred to the great contribution made by Nicola Palladino, founder of this Commission. It was with him that we began to discuss the possibility of a yearly world schools chess event. 15 years ago, the World Youth Games in Moscow presented an opportunity - the first tournament was held (600 players, 20 countries) and ISCU was formed. Since 2005 the FIDE World Schools Chess Championship has been held annually, in Europe, but next year it will be in Peru and then, in 2015, in Singapore.

Mr Kostyev also referred to discussions in the previous day's TRG Commission meeting, especially relating to titles.

Chairman Ali Nihat Yazici: Mr Palladino did good work in this area for many years and we should honour his name. Proposals as to how best to do so are welcome.

I am happy to support Mr Kostyev's activity in Russia, including a CiS Seminar, although it may be noted that it will not be the first, having had seminars in several countries, including Ethiopia, India and Malawi last year.

Every Commission is important in their area of competence and we have no problem to work together with other Commissions. When it comes to TRG and CiS, TRG is responsible for vertical development while CiS is totally different. Our objective is to introduce chess to children in a similar way to art or music. We want them to discover the joy of chess, not necessarily to become masters or grandmasters, or even simple rated players. Therefore, it is very clear that those teaching school children, especially those aged 6-7-8-9 should have a pedagogical background. The formation of these teachers is very different from training trainers.

The FIDE School Instructor title was instituted in 2012. It was discussed again by the Presidential Board in Armenia this year following an objection by the TRG. The PB

understood that this objection had the unanimous backing of the TRG and therefore suspended the SI title. It turned out that the objection came personally from TRG Secretary GM Grivas, not from the TRG itself.

Therefore we respectfully request the Executive Board to reinstate the SI title. [Those present were in unanimous agreement]

In 2014 we plan to have some female Ambassadors, to promote Chess in Schools around the world and I would like to call upon GM Susan Polgar to be one of these. The idea is to get help from those ex-women world champions, who are also mothers - mothers of chess in school children. For example; Susan Polgar, Zhu Chen, Xie Jun, Nona Gaprindashvili, etc...

GM Susan Polgar: I was surprised last year in Istanbul when asked to be a Special Advisor on Higher Education for this Commission, which I accepted with pleasure. I have been involved for many years (since 1996) in chess education and I have seen it change lives – both among those in school and the home-schooled. I know it from every angle, as a mother, player, teacher and trainer. For the last 6 years I have been very involved with Collegiate chess in the USA, for example with my SPICE programme, which allows chess players to get a good education while continuing to develop their career as players.

I am again surprised by the offer to be an Ambassador for CiS. It is an offer that I appreciate and I will try to help in whatever way I can.

Chairman Ali Nihat Yazici: I would also like to ask another Women's World Champion, Zhu Chen to be an Ambassador. She may also tell us about developments towards a chess academy in Zhejiang province, China. Of course, FIDE Academies are the province of TRG, but Zhu Chen's will have an emphasis on chess in schools.

Zhu Chen: I am very glad to get the support of my home town government for this academy. I want to promote chess in schools in my city and the province, starting with 20 kindergartens.

FIDE Vice President and member of commission Beatriz Marinello: I have been working on chess in schools in the USA for 23-24 years, so I may be considered a pioneer. The US Scholastic Committee has some 20 members. In New York City, almost every school has chess. There is both a need for more instructors and also to create more consistency within the curriculum. Throughout the USA there are about 300 organizations devoted to chess in schools, each with its own curriculum.

GM Jaan Ehvest referred to the clear differences between CiS and TRG. TRG prepares sportsmen, but not every Grandmaster reaches the top level. Is there the promise of a job? CiS is totally different, working with chess as an educational tool. There is no competition between CiS and TRG.

Chairman Ali Nihat Yazici asked GM Jaan Ehvest to be an additional consultant to the Chairman in CiS Commission. It was unanimously confirmed by the commission.

Chairman Ali Nihat Yazici: I would like to say how impressed I was by the excellent organization of the Iranian federation and the great potential that was evident during my visits there. Expect great things of chess in schools there thanks to Mr Kambuzia and Mr Karimi. Therefore, we would like to nominate Mr Hadi Karimi as the Asian Continental Coordinator of CiS; that position being currently vacant.

Allan Herbert (DEV Chairman) spoke of the collaboration CiS-DEV and raised the problem of national federations not knowing how to implement a CiS programme. Barbados has 20 schools ready to go, but while the federation knows perfectly well how to do chess as a competitive sport, it is very confused about what the teachers should be doing.

Executive Secretary Kevin O'Connell outlined the existing support materials that can help with that problem in Barbados and other federations. He also pointed to some important resources: Damian Nash's presentation to the 2011 Koltanowski Chess in Education Conference entitled *A New Approach to Curriculum*, which presents chess as 'educational cutlery' (<http://www.utdallas.edu/chess/education-camp/pdfs/nash.pdf> a freely available download) and the books by Dr Alexey Root, linking chess into specific curriculum subjects, for example *Read, Write, Checkmate: Enrich Literacy with Chess Activities*, and more, including history and geography in *People, Places, Checkmates: Teaching Social Studies with Chess* and more besides, most of which can be sampled for free via <http://www.amazon.com/Alexey-W.-Root/e/B001JP9XGW>

GM Susan Polgar spoke of the Chess Palace project by her sisters. The first book (in Hungarian) has just been completed to assist teachers introducing chess as an educational tool (very different from competitive chess), in a new programme in the Hungarian school system.

Chairman Ali Nihat Yazici referred to the problem of copyright restrictions, something that does not apply to the CiS materials. Mentioning, in particular, the books by Dr Olgun Kulaç, developed for primary schoolchildren and teachers. Thanks to sponsorship from Turkiye Is Bankasi, these books are available for use free of copyright. Some or all of them are now available in Arabic, English and French, having been translated by CiS.

The main focus should be on local (continental/regional) workshops to establish what is needed. If we do the CiS job correctly and customize appropriately, this will contribute to DEV output.

He also mentioned that he found the Hungarian project a very interesting programme and had already been in contact with the Polgar Foundation to see how we can support them and work in coordination.

Jerry Nash (USA), new member of the commission, is a consultant for educational training. He mentioned two basic problems which apply in many countries, not just the USA. 90-95% of US scholastic programmes are just one person away from extinction, while a common response from educators is "Chess? You mean the game chess?!" indicating their lack of empathy towards chess in school programmes.

There followed a full and frank exchange between **Mr Tshenolo Maruatona** and **Chairman Ali Nihat Yazici**. On the one hand, the President of the Botswana federation was critical of CiS and the lack of commitment from FIDE since CiS Chairman's visit, especially not having been able to train the teachers. On the other hand, CiS Chairman pointed to the need of federations to be active, to make their commitments, especially to develop and present a Master Plan that can be followed, using the CiS Master Plan template.

FIDE Vice President Lewis Ncube pointed out that we should make a determined effort to improve the information flow, something with which all were in agreement.

Russell Smith outlined the position in Trinidad & Tobago. An agreement was signed with the government, with the Permanent Secretary (= Vice Minister) of the Education Ministry to introduce chess into schools. It is part of a long term project to solve the crime problem among the youth of the islands. Several activities have been selected: chess, scrabble, girl guides, scouts and cadets. These five disciplines are to be implemented in school by teaching teachers in the universities (= teacher training colleges). To graduate, they must choose one of those five disciplines and, after graduation, must teach that in the school, forming a school club. Unfortunately, the Permanent Secretary has retired and Russell Smith also left office in June. It has since been difficult to make further progress.

Luxman Wijesuriya (Sri Lanka) reported that they have started a project with 10 schools of year 4 students. He invited CiS Chairman to visit either before or after the Chennai PB meeting and that invitation was accepted. The visit to Sri Lanka will be after or before PB Meeting in Chennai next month in November 2013.

Robert Katende (Uganda) has been working on chess in schools in Uganda for eight years, but they are lacking in trained manpower. He requested help for the training of teachers to teach the teachers.

There was then a good deal of discussion about the Higher Education aspect of CiS. HE Research member Malola Prasath will be representing CiS at the WISE (World Innovation Summit for Education) in Doha later this month. **GM Jaan Ehvest** spoke of the importance of getting projects agreed that might be funded in the next round of European Union budget allocation (2014-2020). Chairman reaffirmed the need for academicians who can undertake scientific research on chess, gradually building to the stage that chess can be established as a university profession, as at the Russian Social State University. It is expected that there will be a report from that sub-committee at our meeting in Tromso next year.

Chairman then thanked all contributors and officially closed the meeting.

Ali Nihat Yazici
CiS Chairman

Kevin O'Connell
Executive Secretary

Uvencio Blanco
Councillor

Alexander Kostyev
Councillor