

## REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Delegates,*

*I am very happy to welcome you here in CHIOMONTE for this General Assembly and I take this opportunity to thank the Mayor of the city, Gianni Gorgerino and the organisatin committee as well as CIS, the inviting Italian club, for the perfect and generous organisation of this event. While we are here we will learn more about this place and some of us will remember the excellent race they organised in February 2006 during the first week-end of the Olympic Winter Games of Torino, a fantastic moment that remains alive in the memories of all those who had the chance to participate and I have been one of these lucky few.*

*This year my report will be mixed as we had some positive aspects and several negative ones during the past year.*

*We started the FISTC inhternational season with the third European Championship Kart in Grolloo, in the Netherlands. Some problems arose at that race, as quite unexpectedly our Dutch friends from Mushing Holland did not apply our FISTC rules in several areas. The technical part of the race was well organised, the trails were very good and quite flat. However we had to ask all FISTC Member clubs and federations to exceptionnally agree on a change on the age of dogs participating and to bring it back to 12 months only... Then on the site itself we had to struggle again with Mushing Holland because they applied the opening to WSA mushers according to their views and not sticking to the rules, which I remember all of you are first of all that any participant from the WSA should enter the FISTC Championship through a FISTC Member club or federation. In addition I must remind the rule of Nationality we always have applied in the FISTC. I must say that I have been quite disappointed!*

*Our kart responsible man, Gert Kronhom will tell you more about the race and the problems he encountered with some mushers he disqualified. This also shows how arrogant are some WSA mushers who want to come and participate but not either respect our FISTC racing rules nor the FISTC staff including the race Marshall. Participation was good, mainly because we had 40 Dutch starters, a nice surprise as they never showed up to any other Cart Championship. Equipment and rules are still under review and final decisions will only be taken in 2012 but I cannot understand why some people want to permanently fight against three wheel carts that proved to be as safe as four wheel ones. Despite these negative aspects, the race was well organised and most mushers were happy with it.*

*After this first FISTC championship in the season, we started enjoying a lot of snow all over Europe. At my place for example where we usually have a maximum of 7 days of snow in winter, this year we have had snow for 7 weeks... Probably what some people call "Global Warming".*

*We were informed in the fall that Taxenbach had decided to drop the organisation of the Sprin European Championships this year because of the crisis and of money problems!*

*Yes indeed the economic and financial crisis hit all our countries, and we have also seen that on our domestic races with a lower number of starters and sometime with the cancellation of one or two races.*

*This is the reason why I would like to thank particularly our friends from Donovaly for having offered to take the organisation of the Sprint European Championship 2010 and for the excellent organisation they did. So I would like to thank very warmly Miro Dano, Pavel Toma and the Donly club as they saved our sprint season. I personally could not be present for family reasons but, despite some problems, particularly with some dogs, I heard that most of the race went well, as we could expect from the organisers from the Donly Club.*

*There were less participants than usual this year. This is the result of various factors, one being the fact that these Championships were moved from Taxenbach to Donovaly, where most mushers are willing to go next winter for the World Championships 2011, and another one being the lack of money for many mushers. Donovaly is quite far away for a large part of mushers leaving in Western Europe.*

*After Donovaly, as we had thought last year it would be beneficial for mushers to reduce as much as possible travel costs, we moved to another nice place in Slovak Republic, Oravska Lesna, for the organisation of our FISTC Middle Distance and Long Trail Championships. We were only 85 km from Donovaly but not so many mushers came. One of the reasons being that some mushers declined the FISTC Distance Championships to be able to participate to the WSA Sprint Championships one week later...*

*However, I would like to thank also Anton Miklovic, his wife, his friends and his club SAJPSP, for the excellent organisation of the whole race. Everything was there, including the snow and a very cold winter night when I reached that place on Tuesday evening under the snow by -16°C !!! On Wednesday morning I checked with our race Marshal Olivier Favre and everything was still perfect, with really long trails well prepared and a good organisation. On Wednesday afternoon, weather became suddenly very warm and it started raining. The change in temperature was unbelievable, on the same day from -12° to +12° ! The rain and warm weather lasted until Sunday and after a very tough first heat on Friday, the race Jury had to decide to cancel the second and third heat for safety and security reasons and in the first place the health and security of the dogs.*

*Our sport is extremely dependent on weather conditions, particularly our snow season and there is nothing we can do. There I also will let Olivier report in detail on that race, but I already must say that we have been extremely surprised to read that a country that had no mushers on that race could write some absurd sentences such as that the FISTC Board had taken wrong decisions on that race. Should I remind the General Assembly that on a FISTC Championship, the FISTC Board is there only to work and help the organisers, but takes no decisions ! Decisions are taken by the race Marshal and the race Jury ONLY !*

*It becomes more and more unacceptable to read or hear lies or totally unjustified sentences from people that are not present on the spot !!! As usual there were no written complaints, no official protests on that race, so what ?*

*Overall, this season once again, the FISTC has been able to organise its championships even if not in perfect conditions, so we can at least be satisfied for this.*

*That is it for the sportive aspects of our activity. Now let's talk a little bit about some administrative aspects.*

*I personally believe that it is time for the FISTC to come back to its fundamentals. This means that our dogs must be real FCI pure breed dogs ! And FCI pure breed dogs mean dogs within the standard, in size, weight and type ! Please do remember that this is the fundamental difference between FISTC and WSA, as clubs in the WSA are those clubs that left the FISTC (or were excluded from it) because they did not want to admit that a pure breed dog is a dog that is within the standard, and not simply a dog that may show a pedigree (true or false). Remember that FCI issues standards not pedigrees.*

*The Board is making a proposal on this issue and the matter will be discussed at length later.*

*Discussions with the IFSS: I had several exchanges of mails with Bengt Ponten during the last few months. We tried to meet several times but unfortunately could not come to a common date. Why meeting with the IFSS ? Because we the FISTC are at the same level, we represent the sport with pure breed polar dogs and they represent the sport with mixed breed dogs. So a meeting between the two federations will take place during the summer in order to try to find ways of developing cooperations and to create a big, strong unified federation. .*

*On the other hand, while few mushers push for direct discussions between WSA and FISTC, I am quite surprised that nobody from the WSA board has never asked for such an encounter. In addition, the letter was signed by only 20 FISTC mushers, and worse than that some names have been put on the list while those people themselves are against a common championship and a unique federation !*

*So it would be better to come back to our real work.*

*Anti-doping for example is an issue that will need to be taken more and more seriously. Not only at FISTC international level, but also at national level. This means that you will soon need to make anti-doping controls on your national championships. In France, unlucky country that has a Ministry for Sports with very strict rules, this year we had a surprise control, done by the National Antidoping Agency on the sprint Championship and there was one positive control. The musher is being banned in France for several years, he will lose his titles and the FISTC will soon receive a request for sanctions at international level. As from next season I think that for transparency purposes we should publish on our website all the results of anti-doping controls.*

*I would like to take this opportunity to remind everybody that there are also many other very strict rules edicted by the European Commission (where they understand very little about the problems our dogs may be facing when travelling in boxes in the mountains). According to the EU laws, because these texts must be understood as such, most of our dogs would need about 1 m<sup>3</sup> of space for travelling. This of course is crazy and this is why some years ago, with Arno we decided to implement the "FISTC rules" for dog boxes that are much more reasonable and can be acceptable to Animal welfare officials in all our countries when we explain them the real problem. Now we are facing a much more difficult problem. As from last week, and after a decision published in the Official Journal of the EU, travelling all over Europe with more than five (5) dogs is becoming much more complicated. This may threaten our sport and all international championships starting with our FISTC Championships !*

*We started working on this issue and so does the IFSS. The FCI as well has been contacted and we hope that an acceptable solution will be found for sled dogs and our sled dog sport.*

*Some additional work for the new board...*

*Another issue that was worrying this year was communication. Communication was not as good as it was before as it is now two years that we miss our Secretary and Webmaster, Jana. The board tried to find a temporary solution for this problem in having Marco Visconti updating the website, and Gert Kronholm acting as Secretary ad interim. This problem will be solved in a moment when you will elect the new Board.*

*The FISTC continues to increase its members slowly but surely. This year we will have, in a few minutes, the pleasure to welcome a new Member that has sent a complete set of documents in perfect order, South Africa. I just hope they will not bring too many Vuvuzela on our championships. Two other countries are in the process of filling in all the documentation for membership, the USA and Estonia. These countries are willing to enter the FISTC because of our approach of pure breed dogs !*

*I meet new countries in the FCI regularly but we are still quite some time before we will see teams from the entire 83 FCI Member countries coming to our championships but that will come quite soon, Thailand just entered the FCI commission for sled dogs. In many of these countries they need to develop and structure the sport.*

*As I already mentioned last year, we are now in close contact with the FCI. To day I can give you some very positive information. The FCI Sled Dogs Commission has met in Budapest one month ago, on 9 and 10 of May. This Commission of the FCI is working towards an harmonisation of rules for pure breed sled dogs all around the world and paves the way to a formal recognition of our sports by all FCI Member countries. We are working to implement a set of rules to help new countries to develop this sport and now we are recognised also for the dogs. I will give you some more information on this issue later on during the meeting but by September the FCI SDC should have prepared the rules for creating new "Working judges" for sled dogs, and these will be in the future the judges that will come and check the dogs on our races.*

*Once again, I repeat this is fundamental for the future development of our pure breed sled dogs sports as we should find new mushers where they are, and for that work more closely with breeders and the world of dog shows. This is what is done in France and it works very well !*

*This meeting is a special one as we will have elections and that we will need to elect the new board that will lead our sport during the next three years. Before I finish my report as president of the FISTC, I want to take the opportunity to thank very warmly all board members who have been working very hard during the year. They have been very active, efficient and friendly and we have been able to work in a very positive and constructive way. I would like to thank particularly Gert Kronholm who is responsible for Cart races and who has been very active as Board member in taking over the job as Secretary this year, Marco Visconti our responsible for Sprint races who also took responsibility for the website, Arno Roos who did a great job as usual, despite a very busy timetable and Guust Zagers who continues to take care of our dogs in a very efficient way. Walter Treichl is not only an*

*excellent treasurer but also he is very active as an ombudsman in solving many problems and Olivier Favre, last but not least, is essential in the organisation of our championships and for all what is about middle distance and long trails. He has also been a link between the FISTC and Germany, the country where he leaves since Franz Stadolka retired from the Board.*

*Thanks to our board members and to all the people that have been helping the FISTC in all our Member countries we continue to develop and improve.*

*All together we have been able to promote our sports and our wonderful and lovely pure breed polar dogs, but we still have a lot to do. We need to continue to work in a positive way and to progress, and our future looks bright. Anyway, we must all work together to solve any arising problems but please always keep in mind the interests of our sport and of our Federation before the interests of some individuals. Don't forget that the FISTC is the result of many compromises made year after year. It is fragile and the equilibrium can be broken at any time which would then lead to the end of the FISTC as it is now.*

*The past three years have been constructive and positive; I hope the next three years will be even more positive and that all together we will achieve all the goals. It is a heavy and difficult task but also a very exciting challenge.*

*Thank you very much for your attention.  
Franco MANNATO*