Session 4 – Future of Reining

The FEI Director Governance & Institutional Affairs, Francisco Lima opened the session on the Future of Reining by explaining that the main objective of the session was for the FEI, and particularly the FEI Board, to understand what the recommendations of the National Federations and the stakeholders would be concerning the future of the Reining discipline within the structure of the FEI. He informed that ultimately a strategic decision about the discipline's future within the FEI had to be taken by the General Assembly in November 2019 in Moscow (RUS) upon recommendation of the FEI Board.

In order to have a fruitful dialogue and an open debate, the FEI Director Governance & Institutional Affairs provided a historical overview from when Reining first came under the FEI umbrella in 2000, to the signature of a cooperation agreement between the FEI and NRHA/AQHA in 2014, to the present when the cooperation agreement was unilaterally terminated by the FEI in November 2018 due to a number of breaches that were never repaired by NRHA/AQHA. Subsequently, he explained that the non-existence of a cooperation agreement between the FEI and NRHA and the coexistence of two (2) international governing bodies is against the FEI Statutes which require the FEI to be the sole authority for each of its disciplines; he further explained the consequences for the FEI from three (3) perspectives: governance, legal and welfare of the horse. Finally, the FEI Director Governance & Institutional Affairs explained that binding commitment from NRHA to implement the FEI rules on antidoping, stewarding requirements and the age of competing horses were prerequisites for any future cooperation between both organisations.

Bettina De Rham, FEI Director of Reining, explained in further detail the review of the existing structure of FEI Reining from the sports perspective and the measures put in place since 2009 which have assisted in the management and development of the sport, such as revision of sports rules, reinforcement of rules on stewarding and horse welfare. The FEI Director Reining also presented the statistics concerning number of events, registered Athletes and Horses. Despite having grown from 37 events in 2007 to 101 in 2018, the numbers of CRIs were rather stagnant, as to they had mainly been aimed at the top Athletes for qualification to Championships. The number of registered Athletes and Horses were lower in 2018 compared to 2009.

Sven Friesecke (SUI), Chair of the FEI Reining Committee, explained the significance of working on a well thought out plan with the potential to change FEI Reining, based on a three-year and a five-year plan developed by the new FEI Reining Technical Committee, which would include promotion of 1* and 2* competitions to include more riders of different levels and create a larger Athlete base, a U25 category and a youth/mixed Nations Cup series. There was a strong emphasis on Youth being the future of the sport. A video made by several Young and Junior riders giving their support for FEI Reining was shown. The Chair of the FEI Reining Committee stressed the importance of achieving compliance with the FEI rules and policies by all external parties.

The Chair of the FEI Reining Committee stressed the need for taking the time to work towards a possible new cooperation agreement to manage FEI Reining in accordance with the FEI Statutes and called for a clear commitment from the overall Reining community to FEI Reining. This was strongly supported by the European Equestrian Federation (EEF) and individual European National Federations present, as well as Jon Garner from CAN
NF and USA Reining representative Rick Weaver, who saw this as an opportunity to use the National Federations and to go ahead and to build a business plan that would create a pathway to recruit and retain FEI members.

FEI President Ingmar De Vos, had earlier in the day stressed that no decisions were being made and that the discussions were all part of the consultation process. The President also highlighted the importance of the governance and the legal aspects and the necessity to comply with them.

The FEI Secretary General Sabrina Ibáñez wrapped up the day’s proceedings by telling delegates that all the discussions on Reining would be taken into consideration by the FEI Board when formulating any recommendations to the FEI General Assembly in November 2019.