

# **FEI ONLINE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2020**

## **Closing Speech by Ingmar De Vos, FEI President**

23 November 2020

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends and colleagues,

Thank you for being a part of this very first online General Assembly.

Although it has gone smoothly, this does not compare to an in-person GA, and I am really looking forward to next November when we hopefully can come together again, and take the time to discuss and debate the challenges, the achievements and the future of our sport.

We made some important decisions today.

I would like to take a moment to send my heartfelt thanks to all the outgoing members from the Technical Committees and express my gratitude for your support and your expertise these past years, and especially the past few months which have tested our sport and our systems at every level. I also would like to congratulate again the newly appointment members and wish them the same strength and perseverance as their predecessors.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the outgoing Board Members:

To Mary Binks, Chair of Group IX, who has been a great ambassador for our Sport in Africa and who has always clearly voiced her opinions in the Board and has never been afraid to ask the right questions. Thank you so much Mary and we are happy to see that you will continue, at least for a while, to support the newly elected Chair.

To Brian Mangan, Chair of the Audit & Compliance Committee, thank you for your incredible contribution to the FEI and the FEI Board for over a decade! Your commitment over the years has been vital for our structures and governance processes. You should be extremely proud of all you have achieved and especially for the risk management of which today we collect the fruits.

A special word of thanks also to John Eccles, who has been Chair of the Vaulting Committee. You have clearly contributed to putting this discipline further on the map and as a result of this, the Chair position has now become a full Board Member.

I would like to make a particular mention for the outgoing Temporary Endurance Committee and especially the Chair, Sarah Coombs, for their courage and determination when it came to identifying and tackling the real issues of this discipline and, with the creation of the new rules we approved last year, to raise the sport to a new level and help forge a new path for Endurance based on the shared values of the global equestrian family. This is a true legacy they leave behind.

I know I speak for the entire Board when I say you all will be dearly missed!

And now to the new incumbents! Congratulations with your election. You have not arrived at the easiest time, but I am confident you have the skill-set, the determination and the

stamina to pick up where the outgoing members left off. It is a pleasure to have you on-board, and I look forward to working closely with you and your teams in the future.

I am also very happy to see that our two Vice-Presidents, Mark Samuel and Jack Huang, have been re-elected as Chair of their respective Regional Group. This clearly demonstrates the trust your region and National Federations have in you and it is also a big relief for me that you will be able to continue as FEI Vice-Presidents. You have been fantastic team players and I look forward to working with you also in the future.

Our governance structure rests on the great advice and the wise council of a global community and we are indebted to all of the Volunteers who fill our Committees, the FEI Board and the FEI Executive Board. So thank you to all of you once again – and especially for all your hard work through these tough times.

Now to the future, we have a lot to look forward to, and we also have a great legacy to preserve!

With the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo coming up, we need to make sure that our sport is THE shining light in what they are now calling the Games of Hope. We need to show how unique we are in the sporting landscape. From the incredible horsemanship in the arena to the inspired teamwork behind the scenes making it all happen. There is no sport that compares to equestrian and it is our responsibility and our duty to make sure we present the very best of who we are and what we are all about. From Tokyo to Paris to LA, we have to keep our finger on the pulse and deliver cutting edge sport, from production to formats and rules. This is our mission.

As you know, next we year, we will also be celebrating 100 Years of the FEI. We are a long way from 1921 when eight founding members - Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America - came together to organise the sport and formulate international rules and protocols. In the meantime a lot has changed. But we have never been scared of a challenge – and together with all 137 affiliated National Federation Members –we can continue to set ambitious goals.

In terms of what we stand for – I believe in recent years, we have demonstrated that we are a sport that is committed to the future. And we have done this at many levels – from good governance, to sustainability and digital engagement. We have solid foundations to continue building our sport and our fanbase.

2020 was no different, and even though everything was up in the air, we continued to win awards and to be recognised as leaders in these fields. From the ASOIF Governance Review to the IOC Dow Awards. And when it comes to our value in the market place, with no live events and less possibility to engage with our fans or provide returns to our sponsors, we had to act fast. And not only did we win awards for our content, we ensured that our sponsors and our community could remain connected. And by doing this, we were able to maintain a healthy digital footprint, which has become an important performance indicator also in the eyes of the IOC when it comes to evaluating sports in the Olympic programme.

The resilience, determination and passion over these past few months has been inspiring and I am grateful to everyone for their resourcefulness and ability to adapt. This has been a team effort - we have had to think out of the box and we have had to be quick on our feet.

And this is remarkable when you think about it. We are nearly 100 years old – so whoever said you can't teach an old dog new tricks – was wrong. You can and we are living proof!

And last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Sabrina Ibáñez, FEI Secretary General and the wonderful team at HQ for helping us weather the storm, and ensure that we can continue to provide you, our members, and the greater community, with the very best service in these difficult times.

Sabrina, congratulations on your recent appointment as Chair of the ASOIF Diversity and Gender Equality Consultative Group. And for the successful integration of APSO, which you are President of, within GAISF. Once again, you have been the perfect master of ceremonies, making sure we are always on track and that everyone knows exactly what they should be doing and when. In the very same way, over the past few months, you have led the Calendar Task Forces and the HQ fearlessly, always ensuring we fulfill our remit with integrity and panache.

We are a big team, and a big FEI Family, so, one more time, thank you to everyone. And I look forward to seeing many of you in South Africa – and hopefully before - in Tokyo or maybe even in Lausanne for the FEI Sports Forum 2021. We shall see!

Having said this, I now officially close the FEI General Assembly 2020.

Thank you, goodbye and stay safe, stay healthy and stay happy.