**Report on the ECU Congress and 89th FIDE Congress – Chennai, India - July/August 2022**



As FIDE and ECU delegate I attended both the ECU Congress at Thessaloniki in July and the FIDE Congress which was staged in Chennai during the Olympiad there in August.

The three important items of business at the ECU gathering were:

* Election of the Board and President;
* Submission by the Belorusian Chess Federation;
* Decisions on venues for various European representative events.

The President GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili was elected unopposed and so were the ECU Board, with one change, which was that I was elected (unopposed) to the ECU Board in place of Johann Pockesteiner of Austria who resigned his position.

The new head of the Belarusian Chess Federation was given the floor to plead the case for sanctions against Belarus and Russia to be lifted. The Russian delegation did not attend the congress. Many delegates spoke against; I made a fairly impassioned speech, pointing out that the previous head of the Belarusian Chess Federation Anastasia Sorokina, who was in the room, had been forced to flee the country after being denounced by the very person pleading the case for sanctions to be lifted. My fellow ECU board member Dana Reizniece-Ozola stated some facts to the effect that the situation had not changed since the original decision to impose sanctions was taken; indeed, it had got worse.

It was pointed out that the ECU’s position was broadly in line with that of the IOC, who actually proposed more stringent sanctions against Russian participation in sport. The vote to keep the sanctions was decisively in favour, although there were a few abstentions.

There was a competitive tender for the right to stage the European Schools Championships in 2024. I lobbied hard and spoke in favour of the bid going to the Irish Chess Union who would like to stage the event at Limerick. The Irish delegate Desmond Beatty spoke eloquently. It's important I feel that just for once, our parents and players don't have to go to Eastern Europe but can go somewhere in Western Europe, and the venue of Limerick University looks excellent. There was a clear vote in favour.

FIDE Congress

The main business of the FIDE Congress was:

* Presidential elections;
* Sanctions against Russia (not on agenda);
* Resolution from Papua New Guinea;
* Resolution from the ECF.

The presidential elections were a complete non-event. The incumbent Arkady Dvorkovich ran a well-funded, slick campaign which included trips to many continents and countries to see delegates in advance. It was notable that he was present at the ECU meeting described above while his main opponent was not. Mr Dvorkovich also had a permanent presence at the Congress hotel as well as all the advantages that come with incumbency in an election. His opponents, in contrast, appeared underfunded or not funded at all and one ticket withdrew before the Congress.

The main opposition came from a ticket composed of Ukrainian GM Andriy Baryshpolets and Magnus Carlsen’s trainer Peter Heine Nielsen.

 

They made a lot of noise on social media but didn't appear to do the basics of election campaigning. On the floor on the day of the election neither proved to be particularly charismatic or convincing. They did at least succeed in keeping the question of whether or not FIDE should have a Russian as president as a campaign issue, but they had little to say on other matters. Their poor performance on the floor on the day of the election contributed to them getting an even lower total than I thought they would receive. There was an overwhelming vote in favour of Dvorkovich.

The sanctions matter was a concern. UK government policy is for Russia to be isolated culturally and in sport. A Russian delegation did come to the Congress, but there was heavy lobbying behind the scenes and the vote of the European Chess Union was helpful. Ultimately, if I may borrow a phrase from *Yes Minister*, Mr Dvorkovitch decided to give it the ‘full Humphrey’ treatment and put the matter in the hands of a committee; and that committee is chaired by an American who was born in Ukraine.

There was one very serious matter for the ECF. The chess federation of Papua New Guinea is headed by former English junior player Stuart Fancy. For reasons one can only speculate about he has been consistently negative towards the UK.

The Papua New Guinea federation proposed a resolution that would change the FIDE statutes toeliminate the FIDE membership of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as the Faroe Islands, Guernsey and Jersey as well as some other overseas territories which are not both members of the United Nations or do not have an Olympic Committee.

With the help of colleagues from the home nations and Channel Islands I managed to lobby many delegates in advance. I prepared a presentation which I put to the floor during the debate, making the point that the PNG proposal would contravene IOC practice which does not exclude federations retroactively. I also pointed out that a minimum of nine federations would be expelled.

I succeeded in getting the support of the FIDEPresident on the matter and the motion was rejected narrowly by 175 to two with one abstention. I also made the point quite forcefully during the debate that it's ridiculous that we should have to fight something like this every year, and hopefully there won't be any such resolutions proposed in the future.

Together with Nigel short I proposed a motion in the same area to change the FIDE statute 9.4 as follows:

*9.4 For new members, the country of the federation must be a country recognised by the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).*

We propose to change it to:

*9.4 For new members, the country of the federation must be a country recognised by the United Nations* ***or*** *the International Olympic Committee (IOC).*

This was also passed by a large majority.

**ENDS**