

FIDE Social Commission

July, 2021

## **Informative report to 2nd Council Meeting, August 2021**

### 1. Overall status

Chess and FIDE have so much to offer people and arenas outside of the traditional club-and-tournament-landscapes. Such initiatives also allows FIDE to implement its CSR guideline goals – improving the image of the organization as a socially responsible institution, expanding the chess «fans base», and establishing new, strategic partnerships with international institutions.

It is important to explore these opportunities, and establish sustainable FIDE-supported programs in many such new arenas.

The FIDE Social Commission (SOC), like so many others, has underwent a challenging period the last 15-18 months, due to the Covid19-pandemic. Many ordinary activities and plans have been put on hold or cancelled. But as experience in how to cope with the situation has been built, SOC has entered a more active period, and since the beginning of Q2 2021, quite a lot of substancial activity has taken place.

In July, 2021 The FIDE Social Commission chairman Paris Klerides experienced a personal predicament. His native Cyprus faced a huge disaster because of fire, and Mr Klerides was one of many who lost their houses and properties. While currently homeless and living with family, Mr Klerides is now back to work and also active in the commission, among other preparing the Council Report. His personal report can be found in appendix 2.

Mr Klerides' colleagues in the FIDE Social Commission have expressed their most sincere concern for his situation, and offered any help possible.

### 2. Updated Commission Objectives

As part of the general update process for the FIDE Handbook, and due to necessity after the merger of the previous «Social Projects Commission» and «Social Actions Commission» into the current Social Commission a while back, SOC in April 2021 established an updated set of Objectives<sup>1</sup>. The objectives provide a helpful set of guidelines when SOC aims to embark upon a much more active period in the years to come.

### 3. Main recent and upcoming activities

#### a. Chess For Freedom

This project, aims to introduce chess as a tool for education and social inclusion in prisons of different countries around the globe.

In May 2021 FIDE organised a big Chess in Prison event, with the FIDE Online Conference "Chess for Freedom" and the invitational Online Chess Demonstration Tournament for Prisoners from 4 countries - USA, Russia, Armenia and Spain - taking place on May '11.

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1

Among the keynote speakers at the Conference were FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich and the 12th World Champion Anatoli Karpov. The online conference reached well over 100 participants, and in addition many followed the conference via a Youtube channel.

Then, on July 6th 2021, a first ever Intercontinental Online Chess Championship for Prisoners was announced, to be held on October 13.-14.

Complimentary activities to those flagship events have also been developed, aiming to offer all ongoing and aspiring Chess in Prison projects the possibility of inclusion in a network of peers, with access to best practice, invitations to seminars and workshops, tournament activities, start-up help for new projects and reinvigoration of ongoing projects among the elements.

b. Chess for Refugees

In 2019, a successful Chess for Refugees project was launched in Jordan, with FIDE and the Asian Chess Federation supporting and supervising the Asian Chess Academy during the project. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) schools in Amman did also parttake.

During the spring of 2021, a new Chess for Freedom-project in the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya has been developed, together with among others Chess Kenya, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The project is currently moving closer to its planned launch date on August 3rd. The project objective is to improve the psychosocial wellbeing of refugee youth with particular focus on empowerment of young female and girls. There will be some 1600 direct beneficiaries (school girls and - boys) and many indirect beneficiaries. A special Girl Club project will be an integrated part of the activities. The project is designed to last for 2 years until the summer of 2023. An application for financial support has been sent to PDC

Other possible Chess for Refugees-projects are also currently assessed (e.g. in Bangladesh and Greece), and a supporting activity (creating a networking opportunity for those projects that are either launched or in the planning phase) will be introduced also here, just like for the Chess in Prison projects (see previous paragraph).

Also, close co-operation with the FIDE Chess in Education Commission will be important for this kind of projects going forward, since the beneficiaries will often be young children.

c. Other project activities

SOC has chosen to focus on getting up and running sustainable activities in the areas of Chess in Prison and Chess for Refugees before committing much attention to other areas, predominantly due to scarce coordination resources. But a list of possible SOC activity extensions are waiting to be explored, i.e. for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. A special FIDE conference was conducted in March 2021 to review this important area. There were around 150 participants attending the conference. A second stage of this project, with specific training programmes, are currently being developed.

4. Ordinary operational activities of the Commission

SOC day-to-day operations are coordinated through regular Commission meetings, (most recently one in December and one in April), and through close co-operation among some of the most active Commission members. A webpage upgrade initiative is currently starting up, and a new commission webpage ([socialchess@fide.com](mailto:socialchess@fide.com)) has proven very helpful and produced a lot of interesting communication with people and projects ongoing and planned for.

5. Activity calendar for FIDE Social Commission, 2nd half year 2021 – major events

August	Launching Kakuma Kenya Chess for Protection project
	Commission meeting 2, 2021
	Launch survey to map ongoing social chess projects w FIDE involvement
October	International Chess For Freedom Tournament
	Network for Chess for Freedom projects around the world launched
Quarter 4	Training Program for children with ADHD announced
November	Commission meeting 3, 2021

Funding

One way for SOC to support new projects for prisons/inmates, for refugee camps and other sectors, is to be able to provide at least a minimum of funding support, for motivating reasons. Hence, SOC is in the process of applying to PDC for such funding, on a moderate scale, but if approved with important positive effects. SOC will count on the support of the FIDE Council in these processes.

6. Closing remarks

The Social Commission operates in a very important and promising landscape for FIDE, seeking to introduce chess, with its many intrinsic values, as part of the solution for many disadvantaged groups in community. FIDE should allocate energy and resources to the SOC agenda, and expect to get good returns on such investments.

FIDE Social Commission,

July 2021

<i>Appendix 1</i>	<i>Social Commission Objectives (updated version, spring 2021)</i>
<i>Appendix 2</i>	<i>Personal report from SOC Chairman Paris Klerides, particularly on SC activities where he is personally closely involved</i>

## Appendix 1 – Social Commission Objectives (as of April 2021)

**2.x Social Commission (SOC)**

*2.x.1 The SOC shall promote the use of chess as an equalizer, especially by bridging the gap between the social and economic differences that impact people across the world, including gender equality.*

*2.x.2 The SOC shall promote the use of chess as a tool to reach out to children at risk, including those in impoverished communities, refugee camps and those in prisons. This includes actions for life skills, ethics, good character development and empowerment.*

*2.x.3 The SOC shall promote the use of chess as an aid for persons at risk from, dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other mental illnesses, particularly among seniors. Overall this Commission shall deal with issues related to brain aging.*

*2.x.4 The SOC shall develop and distribute strategies, guidance, metrics, standards, education and information on how to increase sustainability in connection with social projects.*

*2.x.5 The SOC shall liaise with other organisations with similar objectives.*



## FIDE Social Commission

### Paris Klerides' (Chairman – Cyprus) Report

First of all, I would like to thank all SC members for their contribution and of course I reiterate my gratitude to FIDE and the President Arkady Dvorkovich for their believing in us by having appointed us as members of the FIDE Social Commission. I have been very enthusiastic about this position realizing that it is one of the key areas of FIDE activity which could be an indicator of how well FIDE handles some sensitive social strata and target groups. Such job of course does need a team work. However last year we did not achieve the expected but we have done a lot.

Unfortunately, immediately after the new composition of the Social Commission, our life changed as we had to face the covid-19 pandemic that still afflicts us, but “we are still here” and continue in any way we can to cope, even though the pandemic has limited our ability to do many things as we would like to do. Furthermore, in this time of crisis, we are all called to protect our health and the health of our friends, family and the fellow human beings.

We have used all our resources and efforts in order to make the Commission members work for the benefit of our mutual cause. We set the goals and proceeded according to the conditions we had to face. We had prepared some projects, we had correspondence with presidents of many federations trying to work with them in order to adopt any of our projects. Unfortunately, we could not have a physical presence the way we wished to have and almost everything was done online. Of course, we each proceeded individually to run the programs in our country which was the easiest way not to get “stuck”. We had scheduled many online meetings which I am sure they were very useful, productive and helped all of us to improve in the difficult social work we perform and to achieve the goals we set up from the beginning.

How many times have we had said that together we can make the difference? We say it often, and it is not a simple statement, nor a rhetoric. This is a motto I use on a project of mine. “Together we can do more”. Today we see more than ever the need for all of us to follow a common direction, to protect each other. As I am preparing this report now, my country and your country too, faces difficult days, constraints, and hard work for those especially on the front line facing the health crisis.

Despite all the problems I mentioned above, recently in Cyprus we had a huge disaster after the fire destroyed the houses and properties of many people. I am one of them who lost my house and I am homeless at the moment struggling to survive.

Nonetheless, regarding our commission’s objective, I would like to emphasize that I am disappointed because after so many attempts to amend FIDE handbook, nothing have been done yet over the past 3 years.

FIDE Social Commission's objective according to what we told FIDE several times to include in its handbook, is - to promote the use of chess as an equalizer, especially by bridging the gap between the social and economic differences that impact people across the world, including gender equality.

- SC shall promote the use of chess as a tool to reach out to children at risk, including those in impoverished communities, refugee camps and those in prisons. This includes actions for life skills, ethics, good character development and empowerment.
- The SC shall promote the use of chess as an aid for persons at risk from, dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other mental illnesses, particularly among seniors. Overall this Commission shall deal with issues related to brain aging.
- The SC shall develop and distribute strategies, guidance, metrics, standards, education and information on how to increase sustainability in connection with social projects.
- The SC shall liaise with other organisations with similar objectives.

Even though, we sent FIDE (I personally) several times in written, the amendment of handbook has not been yet done. I also received an email from Mr. Alex Holowchak from FIDE, replying to our member Mr. Geir Noishem that a new version of handbook will come out this year. At this point I would like to kindly mention that I found all my mails which I personally sent to FIDE since I was appointed, saying that the FIDE handbook still refers to two commissions and that it had to be changed the soonest possible. It still refers to Social Action Commission and to Social Projects Commission. It is with great sadness and frustration that I see that nothing has been done yet.

However, I am happy that FIDE considers the Social Commission an important area going forward and has the full support of FIDE President, Mr. Arkady Dvorkovich and Deputy President and Managing Director, Dana Reizniece-Ozola.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that regarding our activities, we thought of several ways to carry on our mission task. We have started, and we will continue for as long as this lasts, to work on social projects, to use our social media profiles and to offer instructions from official sources, tips, ways to spend these days as easily and creatively as possible. We had prepared a few projects which I and my associates are working on. Last year we had initially focused our efforts on the project "Chess in prison" and then a few other projects were "born". "Chess in poverty", "Chess for refugees", "Chess and Society", "Smart girls and families" and "Sharing chess worldwide".

As I mentioned before, due to the fact that the pandemic limited our ability to do many things, this year we focus on the projects "Chess in Prison", "Chess for Freedom", "Chess for Protection" and "Chess for Refugees".

It would be a huge omission if I do not thank and congratulate our members Mr. Mikhail Korenman from the US and Mr. Geir Noishem from Norway, who made this work come to a standard. I would also like to make a special reference to our new member Nadia Kravshyk from Belarus who was appointed this year by FIDE President. Nadia has

experience with organizing sports events, works with media and sponsors which will be very useful in the everyday operations of the commission and much more.

This is my personal report on SC activities where I am personally closely involved and of course my colleagues will add much more regarding other activities that they are working on closely, due to the fact that “I lost a few episodes” because of personal issues. The good news is that a lot is being done in Social Commission member’s countries.

I can admit that I am grateful and feel lucky because our favorite sport can be played online compared to other sports that have been paralyzed since the pandemic started.

I would also like to add one last thing. We have created our own email account and we hope that soon we will also be able to activate our website which unfortunately we have not yet managed to bring to the desired result.

On our website, we shall publish relevant material to help our fellow citizens to get through our new daily life and to think together how we want the next day to be. We will continue to inform about our activities and what is happening in the world. It is an opportunity to see together how we can act creatively and safely, so that the next day brings us closer to chess and to the future we dream and claim.

Together we will go through this difficult period, so that later, stronger than ever, we can protect the home of all of us: and that is our chess planet.

I will introduce you below to the programs I run myself in Cyprus and to those where I worked closely with other members who ran a program in their country.

Paris Klerides  
FIDE SC Chairman

## Project: Chess in Prison

We started working on this program in mid-Spring 2020. I confess it was not easy at all as the mentality of each country and also the conditions in each prison are completely different. In many cases I think it is from very difficult to impossible to achieve such a task. However, after much effort and using people who had strong connections with senior government officials, we were able to start with ten inmates and then run the first online championship.



Unfortunately, our physical presence in prison was impossible. They only allowed us twice in the beginning and then we continued online. We were also barred from taking pictures or advertising anything in the press or media. So we limited ourselves to the essence of our purpose which was clearly to get inmates to focus on learning and keep them occupied in an activity that is calming and sharpens their mind.

This program will utilize chess as a tool that involves participants in developing their memory, improving concentration, developing logical thinking, promoting independence, imagination and creativity, inspiring self-motivation and many more beneficial traits.

We first taught them how to play the game. Many of them knew the moves and we made sure they also knew the basics and some special moves like en-pasant and castling. The prison authorities gave us a room where the first lessons took place and in the same room we continued the lessons online. That room is called "School", is being used as a library and is the place where inmates spend their time reading books and doing other educational activities. We provided them with a laptop and a chess set. At this point I would like to thank the "Compusource" company for giving us some free laptops and a projector. All other expenses for the purchase of the chess equipment were covered by the remuneration I receive from FIDE as Chairman of the Social Commission. It's something I've been doing since 2014 when I was first appointed as a member. I always spend this amount on social projects.



We tried to take as a model the project of our member Mikhail Korenman that he runs in Chicago but of course to a lesser extent. We studied well how Mr. Korenman works on his program and we rely mainly on it for the future.

We have compiled a table of the benefits that prison inmates have with playing chess and this has prompted others to get involved.

At the beginning of September we organized the first tournament and ten inmates participated. There was a lot of enthusiasm and there was also a difference in the behavior of the detainees from the time they started playing chess.



*(photo not to be published)*

The program is considered very successful and despite the fact that we thought its future was uncertain because of the coronavirus pandemic which has unfortunately changed our lives and the situation is getting worse day by day, we once again managed this year to make strong negotiations with prison authorities and proudly we carry on working on this with physical presence and by having 2 groups. The lessons are conducted every Tuesday and Friday.

**Develop Memory:** Participants will learn to recognize various patterns and remember lengthy variations.

**Improve concentration:** During the game, players are focused on only one main goal — to checkmate and become the victor.

**Develop logical thinking:** Chess requires the understanding of logic.

**Promote imagination and creativity:** Chess encourages participants to be inventive. An indefinite number of combinations can be constructed in chess.

**Promote independence:** Players are forced to make important decisions influenced only by their own judgment.

**Demonstrate that success often is the reward of hard work:** The more practice, the better games players will play. They should be ready to lose and learn from mistakes.

**Inspire self-motivation:** Chess encourages the search for the best move, the best plan, and the most elegant continuation out of the endless possibilities.

**Develop the capacity to foresee consequences:** Chess teaches to look ahead.

**Learn to work within time limits:** Chess players constantly engage in a search for the better move in a limited amount of time. Working quickly and making the most of each minute is a chess goal.

*Our immediate needs at this stage are: 2 Demonstration Boards, 20 Chess Sets with boards, 10 Clocks, 1 Projector and most probably we may need to give a symbolic bonus to our colleague who is doing the lessons. I do not demand anything for myself.*

It is with great pleasure that once again I can state that that the Prison Authorities saw our program very positively and stand by our side in whatever we need.



My closest associate last year and the man who managed to bring us in contact with the prison authorities was Mr. Thassos Ioannidis, a former government official and a member of the largest political party in Cyprus. Unfortunately, the end of the program in prison in 2020 brought us another unpleasant end. Mr. Thassos was found to have a positive case of the coronavirus, he suffered with his health for a few months and on November 29 he passed away.

I want to assure him up there that he will be unforgettable in the memories of all of us and that we will continue the work we started together.

## Project: Together we can do more

This is another successful project by me in Cyprus. Not being satisfied with my personal love and achievements in the field of chess, one of my main goals in life is to promote this love to the younger generations. In my firm beliefs, I have dedicated much of my time and effort in promoting the sport of chess to all ages as well as both sexes. More specifically I started the project 'TOGETHER WE CAN DO MORE' in January 2014 and I continue to this day.

**TOGETHER**  
**WE** Can Do  
**MORE**

The goals set by me were such that people of all ages, all backgrounds, social standings, all religions and colour as well as both sexes can be informed and taught the benefits of learning about the great sport of chess.

Emphasis has been placed on bringing children from the age of 5 till 15 by organizing clinics at schools and various associations. As this was and still is an island-wide effort, some of my personal friends and associates has offered their services and conducted some of the clinics.



In the beginning, the project was funded mainly by OPAP (Greek Organisation of Football Prognostics) and Paris Klerides. Unfortunately today the financial resources have been reduced but the program continues normally but to a lesser extent due to the coronavirus pandemic.



By taking part in the 'Together we can do more' project, the children are given the opportunity to involve themselves in an activity which will be beneficial to both themselves as well as their community, keeping them away from electronic games, computers, Facebook and other such modern brain draining activities. Chess is a great 'exit' from all this. Studies that have been carried out in many countries have shown that the systematic study of chess leads to personal improvement and increase in achieving the academic as well as educational targets of the children.



Chess also helps children to develop skills such as concentration, logical thinking, self-discipline, brain/vision co-ordination, team spirit, spiritual and social growth, self-esteem, acceptance of success or failure and many more beneficial traits.

Due to the fact that chess is more of a male oriented sport where youngsters are more predominant, greater emphasis was placed on approaching women within the middle aged sector. The first clinics were organized with great success and this has formed the basis of more to follow.



All this because... Together we can do more!!!

## Project: Chess for Refugees

This project aims to make chess accessible for refugees. The goals of the project are: to improve refugee's mental health, give them a sense of purpose, help them focus their energy on productive activities, ease their integration within a group and community in the camp, and increase their chances of successfully integrating within our society in the near future.

For this project to happen, three objectives must be met. First, we must acquire chess boards. Secondly we must set up regular chess classes and finally, a competition must be organized shortly after the two first phases of the project have been completed.



For the year 2020, the FIDE Social Commission in collaboration with the organization YSFR, which stands for “Yoga and sports for refugees”, adopted a program on Lesbos, an island in Greece.

In Lesbos, there currently are thousands of refugees waiting for their asylum applications to be processed. These refugees are stranded on the island for many months, up to multiple years, and are placed in refugee camps with poor living conditions. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the island has not been very impacted, however the refugee camps have been under quarantine regulations since mid-March. The rest of the island was free to move around, however these health regulations are still enforced on all refugee camps. Therefore, life in the camps is not only difficult from a physical point of view, but it is also very mentally challenging. The space and hygiene in "Moria" camp is limited, and there are very few activities held to entertain or keep refugees moral going. Recently, there have been more and more knife fights within the camps, exemplifying the current mental state of some refugees, hit by boredom, frustration, anxiety and even depression. On a final note, many NGO's providing mental health oriented activities such as sports, creative activities and even educational content have left the island due to extremist attacks against the refugees and volunteers prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, and have yet to return due to the current quarantine regulations. YSFR is now the main sports NGO on the island, and one of the only ones and I decided to involve FIDE through the Social Commission and work with this organization and its volunteers.

For a better understanding of the current situation, here are some brief statistics. According to one of the latest Aegean boat reports, there are currently over 15000 refugees on Lesbos (Aegean, 2020). Moreover, since January 2020, asylum seekers mostly come on Greek islands from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, State of Palestine and Iran.



Below we provide a more detailed explanation for each of the three objectives.

**Acquiring chess boards:** We must acquire a reasonable number of chess boards, on the one hand, to give experienced chess players in the camps the opportunity to play when they please, to help them improve their chess level and reduce their stress levels. On the other, to successfully hold regular chess classes.

At the moment, from our knowledge, there were only three chess boards within the "Moria" camp, which was already not enough for the existing chess community in the camp.

**2. Setting up chess classes:** Once in possession of chess boards, three options regarding organizing chess classes were available. Given the unpredictable nature of the situation in the camps and on the island, the most suitable option of the three would be picked when starting the classes.

**First,** chess classes could be held near the camp, in nature. At the moment the weather is good enough to make this possible, and there are many empty green spaces nearby. However, this should not be a long-term option in our opinion, as the environment is not optimal when it comes to teaching and learning. But we do believe that holding these classes outside of the camp is quite important, as it gives refugees the possibility to disconnect from the current living conditions and fully focus on the game.

**Second**, chess classes could be held within the "Moria" camp. At the moment, no building is free for classes to be held, but the already existing community regularly plays on tables within the camp. The location is not ideal, however it would be very easy for beginners to join the classes, given that it would be very close by.

**Third**, the ideal scenario would be to give chess classes in the upcoming new YSFR gym. This is probably one of the best options as this new location will be right next to the camp, and have enough space to hold proper chess lessons. However, we had yet to sign the written contract, until then, nothing was certain. Moreover, if we did have this gym available, we should find a time slot that would coincide with the current sport activities held in the gym.

**Instructor:** Regarding who would be teaching those classes, the initial plan was to start with Antoine Bourcieu (YSFR volunteer and chess teacher experience) and several good motivated refugee chess players as teachers. Then, as the classes became more stable, one of the refugees would be appointed as the teacher, and the volunteers from YSFR would only be assisting the class, to make sure everything is going well. We strongly believe that giving responsibility and opportunities to refugees within our activities is crucial. We learned from other sport activities that such practice brings many short and long term benefits to the teachers, and that it becomes easier for new students to join the classes. Moreover, the language barrier is minimized if the teacher is also a refugee. Overall, if such a system is adopted, there will be no cost to the teaching.

**3. Organizing a tournament:** Once the chess classes were underway, organizing a tournament would give refugees motivation and something an event to prepare for, and look forward to. Having a goal, objective or dream is extremely important for refugees in order to stay mentally healthy. A competition can serve as a catalyst for their goals, in the form of direct motivation, or as a step towards greater hope once in another country. Moreover, a competition will positively impact the number of refugees joining the training. There will be more interest for the classes if students look forward to winning a prize, or simply to participate in an excitement event. As prizes, we wanted to offer better chess boards than the usual ones, to give the best players greater incentive to practice chess, and to be involved in the chess community at the camp.



However, the situation has changed quite a lot since September. The main camp called 'Moria camp' entirely burnt and since, the situation on the island has been quite chaotic. Now, the refugee community has been put in a new camp near the smaller old "Kara Tepe" camp, right next to "Yoga and Sport for Refugees" sport gym. For almost the entirety of October and part of November, the gym could open again, but had to be careful on which measures would be taken COVID-19 wise, and so all sports activities held outdoors. During this time, I must admit that we did not work further on the chess project.

Then, Lesvos was set under lockdown, and my colleagues have been obligated to stop all their activities. The new camp has closed, letting refugees out only once a week for four hours, depending on their registration number. They can do groceries or go to their lawyer, but they cannot do much more. Most people on the island believe that the camp will stay closed despite the end of the lockdown, just as it was done after the end of the first lockdown in Lesvos. The authorities prefer to keep the camp closed as they then have complete control over the situation, despite violating human rights. Therefore, if that happens in the future as well, it won't be able to hold sports or chess classes.

So, we decided that we had two ways to go about the project, either the camp stays closed or we need people from within the camp to organize the chess activities using material that we will provide them. Or the camp opens and we can carry on with the plan we had in mind in the first place. I believe the first option also to be possible, as I wanted to have community volunteers to carry on with the project in the first place so that they would not be dependent on our help. My colleague assured me that he knows personally very well some of the chess players in the camp, he is sure that we can make things work well despite not being present physically with them.

Regarding where the project was left, we later on found a volunteer from Amsterdam who is in contact with his chess club to get us chess boards and pieces. However, the club is quite slow at answering so it could take some time, but they are already interested in the project. Moreover, there is also a new volunteer from YSFR who will be staying for more months on Lesvos, who is passionate about chess and agreed to help us on the project and take it under his responsibility. My colleague Antoine, has been on Lesvos for several months but he had to return home, but this way we would still have someone on the ground.

Finally, we had emailed many chess companies asking for donations but without success, but we keep on trying regardless.



## Project: Chess for Refugees (Cyprus)

After all these difficult efforts so that we can carry out our work on the island, I took the initiative to start something similar in Cyprus, knowing of course the great degree of difficulty I would face. After many meetings and consultations with the former Minister of Justice, I personally visited one of the refugee camps that we have in Cyprus.

My first impression was very disappointing and I immediately realized that I had to face a big obstacle in front of me. However, I did not give up and tried my best.



I walked between containers and people who come and go unnecessarily. At the moment the place accommodates around 230 people. They come from 18 countries that are mainly war-torn or plundered by civilians and are Syrians, Kurds, Africans, Iranians, Iraqis, Pakistanis, Indians.

They are divided into two groups which are single men and women and families, among them 70 children which, according to the manager, they go to school in a village near the camp by bus that passes outside the centre, while the infrastructure as it has been developed can accommodate around a hundred more people.

The need for improvements in material conditions is daily and fortunately the government has managed to have a permanent presence of technicians who immediately repair any damage that occurs. I asked how long one can stay in the centre and the person in charge of the area explains that due to the problems with employment and language, a population has accumulated, mainly families, whose stay is more than one year.



He further notes that for those who can, they try to find them a job, however the options are limited since until their status is recognized they have access to only six professions

such as gas stations, farms, garbage collection, recycling, olive picking and some other handiworks.

The manager told me that he remembers that when he took over there were only four social workers in the centre, a cleaner and three security guards, while today there are about ten voluntary organizations that offer psychological support, help finding a job, help finding a home while each container has an air condition for hot and cold air.

Recently, the tragic situation prevailing in the Asylum Reception Centre is again on the front pages of the media and other online media, with the inhuman living and hygiene conditions and their effects on the health of the refugees, especially young children and other vulnerable individuals.



They try to “kill” their hours that do not pass by smoking only, they try and become insignificant so as not to bother and not be bothered. At night, lying in a container two by two, under a dim light and crammed between children, pots, clothes, shoes, toys, food, duvets, blankets, suitcases, you only pray to be able to sleep.

Once again, it turned out that the covid pandemic was a big obstacle to the completion of our project. In order not to stop the efforts and succeed, we cooperate with a few people in the camp who know how to play chess and help us to teach the rest who are interested. I personally provided them with 20 chess sets and a few chess books for beginners. Recently we were informed that many of them play chess every day and they seem to enjoy the game.

The measures announced by the government are very strict and visits to the camp are not allowed. There is also an issue with the vaccinated and the unvaccinated people. Unfortunately, online courses are not available.

## **Project: Chess for Refugees (Jordan)**

The initiative, launched by Asia Chess Academy under the supervision of FIDE and the Asian Chess Federation with the goal of spreading chess amongst refugees, comprised an intensive chess camp (5 hours a day, for 9 days) and a chess tournament held for 45 students from one of the (UNRWA) schools in Amman.

Even though the camp was held online due to the global pandemic, where kids were not supposed to enjoy the game as in non-virtual gatherings, the kids showed a massive passion for the game and kept communicating with their trainers even after the camp has ended.

Asia Chess Academy extended its Chess for Refugees initiative by awarding the winners of the tournament which was held on World Refugee Day on June 20, 2020.



Despite the difficulties posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in overcoming social distances without compromising safety procedures and priorities, Asia Chess Academy cooperated with the school's administration in organizing a closing ceremony to award the winners of the tournament and provide chess tools for the participants to encourage participating kids' efforts to advance in learning the game.



*Asia Chess Academy Director, GM Sami Khader, while awarding the winners of the tournament which was organized by Asia Chess Academy under the supervision of FIDE and ACF on World Refugee Day.*

The closing ceremony witnessed a great joyous time and kids were full of gratitude and ambition to chase their dreams in mastering the game.

Thanks to FIDE President Mr. Arkady Dvorkovich for his interest and personal follow-up to them throughout the entire event.

## Project: Smart Girls and Smart Families



Smart Girl is an old and very successful project in Uganda, created by Social Action Commission in 2014 and is still running by our commission's member, Robert Katende. This project used to receive support from the Social Action Commission and has been developed in conjunction with the United Nations Women Organization «Un Women». For the first time ever, the Social Action Commission organized a ladies chess clinic that was championed by WCM Phiona Mutesi. It ran for one week and it attracted 460 girls from the slums and surrounding communities.

Phiona was a great inspiration to the girls and she shared her experiences with the entire group, both in the mornings before the Chess Sessions and in the evenings where there was also a question and answer session. She encouraged fellow girls to believe in themselves no matter how big the challenges might be and that they should never lose hope because it is the only component that shall enable to overcome. It was a great clinic and the first of its kind in Uganda. On top of providing the children with meals for the whole week, each of the girls was given a chess set to enable them to train and practice what they have learned and a beginner's chess packet to allow them to revise and discover more of the sport. The «Smart Girl Program» focuses its efforts on empowering girls socially using chess as a tool that could help make them become future productive people in their communities. At all the centres, the children are brought by their guardians as they go to work in their gardens. Sports Outreach established these centres to help mentor and care for the children who would have instead been left in the huts by themselves thus, making them vulnerable to many things.

The children are given some pre-school learning and now, a great empowering tool of chess that is basically aimed at developing their memory, improving concentration and logical thinking with a purpose of promoting imagination and creativity to enhance self-esteem and problem solving capabilities.

This year I worked with our commission's member, Alex Sorras who lives in Luxembourg and we renamed the program to “Smart Girls and Smart Families”, taking also the idea and following the example of the French Chess Federation and of course after the encouragement of FIDE Deputy President Mr. Bachar Kouatly, during the first online meeting of our new restructured commission. We decided to start this program in November 2020 in collaboration with European Small Nations Association but due to the pandemic it became impossible to do anything. There are already two countries to deal with such programs, France and Uganda and of course we are expecting more in the future.



This project is a pure socialisation of people through chess activities which can be supported or funded by FIDE, local federations and if not the National Agency of Sports, a part of the Ministry of Sports.

The translation of the French text of the logo is “*the meeting of all talents*” which makes not so much sense in English language I think we can keep the same logo with one of the following texts.

*Motto:*

*Get into Social chess!*

*Get in2 chess, a lifetime sport of enjoyment!*

*Open up the chess world 4U*

*Transforming lives through chess*

Our social Commission undertakes the following actions:

- Determine one contact person per country
- Controlling and asking for statistics of the participants
- Organising and supporting all events in the countries
- Announcing all activities in the commission’s site and in Media

The success of the French program and the strong eventual collaboration and the very close connection of the Social Commission with it, guarantees a very prosperous future for all interested countries.

However, a few new programs through this started in Luxembourg which are in progress.

1. **Chess Stars** is a non-profit organisation officially recognised by the Commerce Registry of Luxembourg and it was created by two qualified and experienced chess instructors, Mr. Alex Sorras and Mr. Nikos Komninos, with a view to providing high-quality and engaging chess lessons in a systematic and professional manner. The main objective is to practice and promote chess and facilitate its members’ participation in competitions and chess tournaments. It also seek to play an active role in developing chess in Luxembourg by providing tailored coaching and advice and establishing links with schools and other chess clubs, organising tournaments for those who enjoy the competitive aspect of chess, encouraging young players to participate in national or international competitions and undertaking various activities to introduce the public to the game of chess and its benefits.

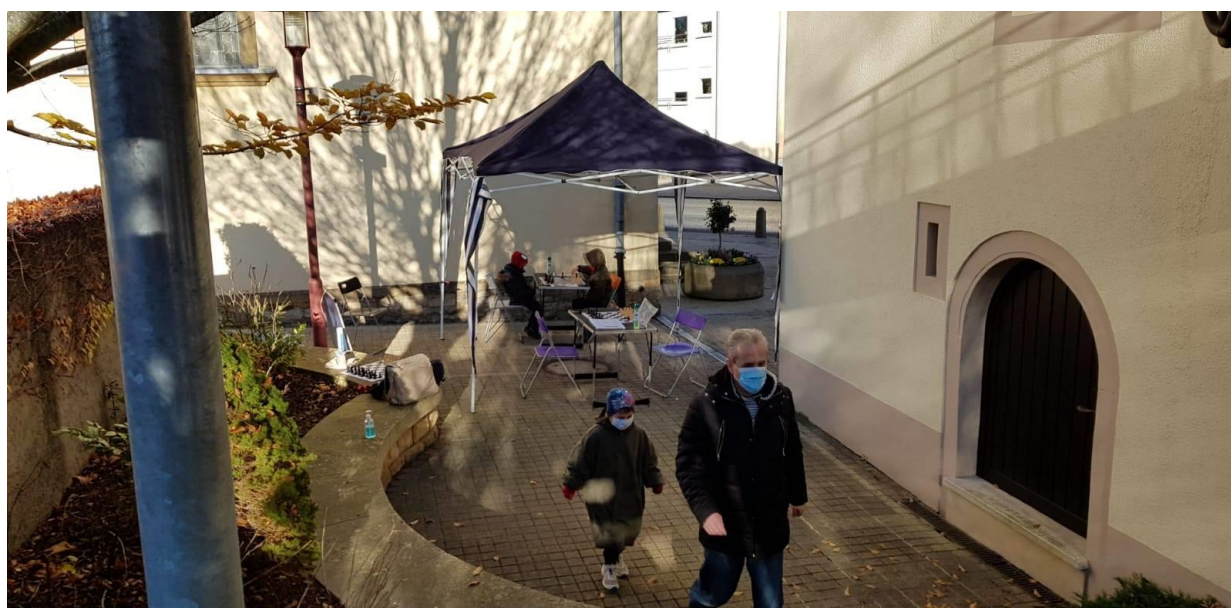


2. **“Outdoors” Chess Rising Stars Program.** As announced by the government of Luxembourg, a partial lockdown would come into force until 15.12.2020. Due to this and in order to stay in shape the Ministry of Sports proposes, sport in groups of four outside. So the program runs outdoor chess classes on Saturdays at least, if indeed the weather allows it. We were obliged from September 2020 to do the training with only 4 students instead of 12 max. This is no profitable at all and the instructors are not willing to raise up the lessons fees. After all and the lockdown in Luxembourg,

the instructors started going ahead outdoors and the program would be on a local TV channel. At the same time, online lessons were given by the instructors.



3. **“Chess Lab”** a combination of online and physical training. Some lessons were organized in the club president’s house renovated from June, without touching at all chess pieces, only teaching by projector, Skype and tablets and an online tournament just after in the same place. The teaching method was chess tutor 2&3 with exercises on the screen to do. The trainer as a supervisor wearing his mask was approaching the children to give instructions and to correct the mistakes.



**Smart Families:** Developing family practice and inter-family competitions online or OTB. Three to five clubs in the country organise online family day once every 2 months and competition OTB. Three to five clubs organise family trainings once per month. This project can be connected perfectly with the Smart Girls project weekend by participating all in the event.

## **Project: Sharing Chess Worldwide (Haiti)**

“Sharing Chess Worldwide” is a project from the FIDE Social Commission of which the main goal is to promote the game of chess in the orphanages, among the children on the street and those living in the slum neighborhoods in collaboration with the local federations.

The second goal of this project is to bring closer FIDE Commission with the local federations by engaging them in a long term project which will involve efforts from both parties for the benefit of the chess players from the local communities of each country.

### **Global Implementation**

“Sharing Chess Worldwide” is a project consists of coaching young kids from impoverished background through the internet by coaches selected by the SC from various countries. Initially, SC will divide the participants by zoning based on the common language spoken and the time zones to allow the lessons to reach a maximum of participants. SC will invite each federation interested in this project to show their interests by selecting coaches from their members with Elo rating of over 2300 to participate in a regional tournament. Each tournament will include participants of a common language.

The winners of each tournament will be selected to coach specific countries with the same language and within the same time zone.

SC shall try to be bearing the cost of the coaches and the local federations will be responsible to assist with the costs of the logistics and the resources to make the event possible such as internet, chess sets and projectors.

The local federations will partner with local NGOs, local authorities and the private sector to generate the funds necessary to launch this project. In coordination with the local federations, SC will determine the teaching schedules for each time zone and each public. Through Zoom, the coaches will present their chess lecture to the regional communities they have been assigned to.

### **Specific objectives to be reached by "Sharing Chess Worldwide"**

- Promoting and developing chess to children living in precarious conditions
- Strengthening the partnership between FIDE and local federations
- Influencing local federations to implement social chess in their projects
- Developing partnerships between local federations, FIDE and local sponsors (NGO, Governments and private sector)



## **Project: Chess for Freedom**

This project, aims to introduce chess as a tool for education and social inclusion in prisons of different countries around the globe.

In May 2021, FIDE organised a great “Chess in Prison” event with the FIDE Online Conference "Chess for Freedom" and the Invitational Online Chess Demonstration Tournament for Prisoners from 4 countries - USA, Russia, Armenia and Spain - taking place on May 11. Among the keynote speakers at the Conference were FIDE President Mr. Arkady Dvorkovich and the 12th World Champion Mr. Anatoli Karpov.

Aiming to support and promote this line of work, FIDE and the Cook County Sheriff's Office (Chicago, USA) have signed a cooperation agreement.

Then, on July 6th 2021, a first ever Intercontinental Online Chess Championship for Prisoners was announced to be held on October 13 – 14 2021.

Complimentary activities to those flagship events have also been developed, aiming to offer all ongoing and aspiring “Chess in Prison” projects the possibility of inclusion in a network of peers, with access to best practice, invitations to seminars and workshops, tournament activities, start-up help for new projects and reinvigoration of ongoing projects among the elements.



During the spring of 2021, a new “Chess for Freedom” project in the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya has been developed, together with among others Chess Kenya and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The project is currently moving closer to its planned launch date on July 30th. The project objective is to improve the psychosocial wellbeing of refugee youth with particular focus on empowerment of young female and

girls. There will be some 1600 direct beneficiaries (school girls and boys) and many indirect beneficiaries. A special “Girl Club” project will be an integrated part of the activities. The project is designed to last for 2 years until the summer of 2023. An application has been PDC.

Other possible Chess for Refugees projects are also currently assessed (e.g. in Bangladesh and Greece), and a supporting activity (creating a networking opportunity for those projects that are either launched or in the planning phase) will be introduced also here, just like for the Chess in Prison projects.

Also, close co-operation with the FIDE Chess in Education Commission will be important for this kind of projects going forward, since the beneficiaries will often be young children.



## Project: Chess in Poverty

*Transforming Lives through Chess!!!*



In a world full of corruption, poverty, crimes, wherein some areas children are forced to work, forced into illegal activities for easy money and being exploited, chess introduction as an enjoyable play can be enticed into these areas and make a difference in their innocent minds. It can provide child protection, empowerment, the great initiative in life, rehabilitation for children that were forced to take the wrong path. It can improve their education, change their way of thinking, leading them to have a broad and open mind. It will also help them into the world with strong morals and to respect each human being with values and dignity. As a whole, children can be protected from “child abusers” and “child offenders. We aim to have as many chess clinics as possible in those areas. By “hearsay” more children will be intrigued and follow others. Curiosity will attract them, at first, but those with a challenging mind will love the game and the challenge will be for both kids and coaches. In countries like Uganda, chess was used as a vehicle to develop young people from the streets and slums, showing them the right way to become respectful and respected individuals and even great leaders.

By teaching children how to play, we can use the platform to teach life principles and nurture character. We shall first create few chess centres in different areas, either in cities or in villages. Through Chess as a platform, we shall empower and prepare participants for formal education by enrolling and supporting those who would otherwise have no chance to go to school. Through collaboration with other partners and friends, we shall also enrol youths for vocational training in order to enable them be self-reliant.

In FIDE Social Commission, we are aware that not everyone enrolled to the academy centres will turn out to be great Chess player but we are sure everyone can be a great individual empowered and prepared to achieve their full potential thus leading a very successful life.



So we focus on each participant as an individual because we are Life Coaches, we support and empower them to work and attain their life goals. Our experience and our willingness to help, shall restore hope, disciple and nurture good character, educate and develop leaders on top of producing National and International chess players. There will be no charge as we know the financial situation in poverty areas and of course in order not to be an obstacle for anyone to participate. All this shall create a welcoming atmosphere to the participants making it possible for the less privileged to have an opportunity to hope and achieve. The first participants who will start the program will be empowered academically through the support of our partners and they will be leaders managing the different centres alongside their academic professions.

This wonderful vision and impacting program shall lead children from the streets and slums to national and international chess events.



**Clear Mission:** We shall create and support programs that have a positive impact on many lives. Using chess as a platform to empower teachers in communities, as well as providing support that will help children to develop life skills and promote positive social development, we are helping make a difference. In addition to support children in chess all over the world, we shall organise seminars that empower the teachers, social workers and players within these communities so that they may support and create programs for children at risk. Providing access to FIDE seminars is a key component to empowering chess promoters and players so they acquire expertise to build chess in their countries.



**The key:** is to create programs, training and opportunities that empower the people that are using chess as a tool for social development within their bases, whether they are teachers, instructors and/or social workers.

**Intergeneration - Children and Seniors:** The FIDE Social Commission shall seek to strengthen the social fabric of communities and create opportunities for encounter through chess, that can strengthen the dialogue between generations.



*Chess in poverty*

**Old Project of Social Action Commission: Smart Girl Chess Program:** This program aims to become a neutralizer for the cultural beliefs that have always marginalized women. Some of the girls in the communities we have supported would never have expected to participate in programs that would make a difference in their lives – and now Chess has provided this opportunity! Former members of our commission were able to find sponsorship for some of the youths in the “Smart Girl Chess Program”. These young girls come from extreme poverty conditions and with the support of these sponsors they have been given scholarships and are now enrolled in boarding school for formal education. The program now runs by former SAC member and very good friend of mine, Mr. Robert Katende.



*Smart Girl Chess Program*

***CHESS IS AN AMAZING GAME AND TOOL, WITH THE POWER TO TRANSFORM LIVES!!!***

**Other project activities**

Social Commission has chosen to focus on getting up and running sustainable activities in the areas of “Chess in Prison” and “Chess for Refugees” before committing much attention to other areas, predominantly due to scarce coordination resources. But a list of possible SC activity extensions are waiting to be explored, i.e. for “Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder”. A special FIDE conference was conducted in March 2021 to review this important area.

**Ordinary operational activities of the Commission**

Social Commission day-to-day operations are coordinated through regular Commission meetings, (most recently one in December and one in April), and through close co-operation among some of the most active Commission members. A webpage upgrade initiative is currently starting up and a new commission webpage ([socialchess@fide.com](mailto:socialchess@fide.com)) has proven very helpful and produced a lot of interesting communication with people and projects ongoing and planned for.

**Funding**

One way for Social Commission to support new projects for prisons/inmates, for refugee camps and other sectors, is to be able to provide at least a minimum of funding support, for motivating reasons. Hence, Social Commission is in the process of applying to PDC for such funding, on a moderate scale, but if approved with important positive effects. Social Commission will count on the support of the FIDE Council in these processes.

**Closing Remarks**

The Social Commission operates in a very important and promising landscape for FIDE, seeking to introduce chess, with its many intrinsic values, as part of the solution for many disadvantaged groups in community.

FIDE should allocate energy and resources to the Social Commission agenda and expect to get very good returns on such investments.

Gens Una Sumus

Paris Klerides  
FIDE SC Chairman