

FIDE Zonal Council Meeting

Online

December 14, 2023

15:00 CET

Introduction and welcome.

Mr. Dvorkovich welcomes members of the Zonal Council and attendees to the annual meeting. He adds that we all should be proud of what has been done on national, zonal and continental levels with regard to chess activities. He also notes very productive Commissions' meetings with numerous proposals submitted to the FIDE Council and General Assembly. Mr. Dvorkovich thanks all the Commissions' and Councils' members for their active work during the year, mentions the tournaments taking place at the end of the year and reminds that the next year is the year of the 100th anniversary of FIDE, so all FIDE Zones and members are expected to actively take part in the series of activities, which will be further outlined by Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola. He introduces the topics on the Zonal Council Agenda, invites all Federations to bid for the FIDE events and wishes the participants fruitful deliberations. Apart from introducing the Zonal Council Agenda, Mr. Dvorkovich shares some topics of the General Assembly 2023 Agenda.

Zonal Activities 2023. Review.

Mr. Freyd thanks President for his encouraging words. He then gives the floor to Ms. Goryaeva who presents Zonal activities 2023 with the statistics and figures of the Development Fund:

In its report the Planning and Development Commission:

- Presents covered activities for Zones in 2023
- Outlines priority areas focus by Zone
- Specifies a Zone as an actor of chess development.
- Informs of the Development Budget funding outlined by Zone.
- Reports on the exact proportioned spending of the Development Fund allocations by each Continent with nearly 50% of the funding spent to Championships hosting, with the other articles of expenditure being capacity building and talent training.
- Requests Zones to inform the Planning and Development Commission more about all specter of activities in each Zone.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola adds that for two years FIDE has been requesting Zones to be more proactive and come forward with more initiatives and projects along the lines of the special provision in the FIDE budget for supranational bodies (Affiliated Organisations and Zones). She also confirms that in 2023 the formulas and criteria for development funding have been amended and Funding Guidelines devised with the focus on the clear understanding of the roles in respect of a certain project as well as demonstrating financial sustainability of the projects

when submitting them. She welcomes the feedback on the guidelines from the Zones which will be helpful in adjusting and improving FIDE financial programmes.

Ms. Namangale comments that there has been some complexity in a number of situations concerning applying for financial assistance and gives an example of some events where a Zone was unable to find a Zone tournament organiser and a venue. She underlines the lack of formal structure in many zones and even sometimes an absence of a zone bank account, which prevents a Zone from implementing projects.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola encourages the authors of the initiative to consider the bottom-up approach and mobilize the Zonal work administratively in order to make the cooperation more efficient and reliable also in the context of the Development Fund.

Mr. Freyd stresses that the level of interaction with Zone is a strategic aspect and an important move for the Planning and Development Commission when initiating a discussion with the Zones. He also underlines that although the Planning and Development Commission's analysis is most based on the work with the multi-nation Zones rather than one-nation ones, the Commission welcomes all projects from all the Zones.

Mr. Voigtlin comments that he realises in Zone 1.2 an overlap with Mitropa Chess Association which is already a developed structure, so the issue is to bring these two bodies closer together.

Mr. Freyd replies that in Europe there is a different way of acting regarding zonal activities and the only zonal tournament in Europe is the Small Nations Championship.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola gives a positive example of the African Continent where the Continent motivates Zonal activities and agrees with Mr. Voigtlin's example that demonstrates why Affiliated Organizations may be more successful than Zones in case they have an established legal or organizational structure. She also stresses that Zone Presidents should in this capacity liaise with respective Affiliated Organisations and step forward, without waiting for FIDE to judge and mediate.

Mr. Priest informs the Council of a pilot project, where the states have to apply to the US Chess Federation and request assistance for their specific projects with the stress on sharing the results of these projects as well as ideas with all members of the USCF. He thinks that a successful and sustainable project could always be slightly adjusted it for the needs and circumstances of another zone.

Mr. Freyd agrees that it is a very interesting idea.

Way forward. Zone as an actor for chess development.

Ms. Goryaeva continues to present the Planning and Development Commission activities and provides details of the FIDE funding by zones, with focus on multi-country zones. She explains the table in respect of the interaction between Zones and Federations in 2023.

Mr. Freyd welcomes opinions and ideas on how to make Zone a more active element in the FIDE structure. He notes that no Zone has applied for financial assistance to the Planning and Development Commission directly.

Ms. Namangale opines that challenges should be touched upon also.

Ms. Lopang thanks everyone for fruitful interaction. She further proceeds to acknowledge the challenges in terms of difficulties with finding an organiser for the Zonal events, writing reports and several other issues due to a high level of financial arrears of many African Federations, which makes them non-eligible for FIDE Development Funding (most level 4 or 5 Federations), despite the efforts of the FIDE Management Board members to assist Federations in preparing an application for FIDE funding. She welcomes the initiative of closer cooperation between Zones and existing formal structures, affiliated to FIDE. She also mentions that an actual alignment of Federations to Zones should be exploited in the future based on the structure of the Association of Africa Sports Council.

Mr. Freyd agrees that the more aligned the FIDE structure is with the Multi-sports Continental Associations, the better.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola acknowledges the assistance FIDE is carrying out to help Federations with submitting applications through training on a personal level, meeting with the Federations which do not have strong administrative capacity. She underlines that at today's workshop Federations will get more training. She further agrees that the Federations in arrears do not comply with the Development Fund requirements and urges them to liaise with the FIDE Financial department in order to agree on a schedule to fulfil their financial obligations. She also confirms that FIDE is not in a position to write off the debts, but it is flexible in agreeing on the payment schedule, which would formally mean that a Federation becomes eligible for applying for the Development Fund. Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola concurs with Ms. Lopang that the FIDE Zone structure should maximally comply with the Multi-sport Continental structures which would allow greater integration with sport events and potentially increase continental financial opportunities. She opines that in such cases, the initiative should come from the continent based on the agreement within the Continent that such changes are needed. She thinks the FIDE Council shall be flexible regarding this matter.

Mr. Freyd concurs with the comments of Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola.

It has been further underlined that the Zonal events can be financed both from the funding for a Zone or continent, based on the financial criteria and capacity for zonal self-financing as well as if the continent considers this a priority.

Mr. Dvorkovich advises that in case a Zone or a Federation wishes to start a dialogue with their respective Government, he in his capacity as FIDE President, would be happy to write a letter of support to the country officials.

Mr. Hassan informs that following the decision of the African Continent, three zonal tournaments 2023 will be organised in January 2024 and asks for the clarification whether the funds will be transferred to a Federation or to a Zone. He confirms that the Zone will provide all relative documentation for those events soon.

Mr. Freyd confirms conceptually that the Planning and Development Commission will support the three above-mentioned zonal events since the request has come from the Continent. The final approval will follow the soonest and the Zone will be informed about the Commission's decision. He adds that the Commission will meet with the Continents to discuss the plans regarding the respective support for 2024.

Ms. Lopang adds that the Zonal Presidents want to have the authority to apply for assistance. Mr. Freyd replies that this matter has to be considered separately.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola reiterates that for zonal championship a Zone can come with an initiative itself, but the financial criteria should be preserved formally.

Mr. Bologan underlines that based on his experience of visiting the countries in 2023 there is a need to differentiate the budgets for Continental and Zonal support. He suggests that a meeting between the Planning and Development Commission, Management Board and Continental Presidents be held to finalise this matter.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola clarifies that the draft budget for 2024 which is very similar to the one of 2023 in terms of the amounts for Development Fund, will be most likely approved by the General Assembly, with a fixed amount of 100,000 euro assigned to each Continent. She opines that FIDE should have an understanding of the schedule for the distribution of this amount in the Continent as well as of the Continent's strategy for allocating these funds. She adds that there is a limited amount of 150,000 euro to be allocated to Affiliated Organisations and Zones, which is an amount provided on a "first come first served" basis. She adds that a limited flexibility of the FIDE Development Fund needs to be kept in mind as the Zonal events can be financially supported from the Continental budget of 100,000 euros or from the budget for Affiliated Organisations and Zones of 150,000 euros.

Mr. Bologan opines that the Planning and Development Commission needs to advise Zonal Presidents on the specifics of what projects they should propose in order to be considered for the amount of 150,000 euro, as well as the timeframe of the applications and other details.

Mr. Freyd agrees but reminds that all the specifics have been explained to the Federations at the start of 2023. He further adds that the Commission will continue providing details and explanations for all the projects which are eligible for assistance.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola adds that the Guidelines are published, and the Commission will be always happy to assist in answering questions regarding the document.

Workshop: FIDE Development Levels

Mrs. D.Reizniece-Ozola introduces the next point of the Agenda on the development levels which is a complicated issue in her opinion. She admits that criteria of development levels have rightly been questioned and mentions that the goal is to devise a new system with more evaluation aspects used for this purpose. There have been several attempts to deal with this issue but they were unsuccessful due to either bad timing or some other reasons. She stresses that the Planning and Development Commission has been requested to share their vision on the issue which will be addressed during this year.

Mr. Freyd makes a presentation and gives a background of previous work by the previous Planning and Development Commission's team. He gives an example of different areas of financial regulations where different development zones are being referred to and presents their analysis of the data. He then mentions the Congress regulations in terms of assistance to various Development levels.

Mr. Freyd explains the reasons why additional criteria have to be included and presents the timeline of the work which will be done by the Commission in this respect.

The discussion then continued why it is important for National Federations to be active in respect of this initiative and how the Zones can support the efficient running of the projects. Mr. Freyd further emphasizes what incentives a Federation should implement to reach a higher development level.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola comments that development levels are mainly used as Development Fund criteria and therefore the rating of top players does seem to be a very vague criterion as even the economic state of the countries in Development levels is not taken into account. She agrees with Mr. Freyd that a right direction is to combine existing criteria with more economic-oriented ones.

Mr. Chahidi underlines the existing geographic difference as another factor and informs that the Comorian Islands are in need of dynamic projects to be supported on all levels and mentions their three-year struggle to develop chess and aspirations for the FIDE support in the coming year.

Mr. Priest concurs and adds that the geographical situation is a tremendous challenge in the Caribbean zones also.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola replies that for the travel grants in respect of the Chess Olympiads, distance is also included as one of the factors, on top of development levels and underlines the importance of a transition period for every reform. She adds that the Federations' incentives to receive travel grants of a higher Development level are welcome.

Mr. Dvorkovich underlines the importance of keeping the budget in mind when making relevant changes.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola draws the attention of those Federations which will be negatively affected by changes, that potential additional support will be available provided they demonstrate growth and excel.

Mr. Cross proposes that the annual questionnaire provided by each FIDE member Federation at the beginning of each year can be also used for the extraction of useful information for such factors. He opines that these data can be used as indicators for development funding.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola thanks Mr. Cross for acknowledging the Federations' survey. Every answer provided allows FIDE to work better with Federations. She agrees that this is a very useful material to be used for the new development system as well. As for the Gender Equality Index mentioned by Mr. Cross, she says that this is not the excellency index, but has its specific focus on evaluating equality between men and women in the country. She thanks the Commission for acknowledging additional support programmes for those Federations which arrange some extra activities.

Mr. Lamin comments on the Federations' survey and adds that the Federation was unable to complete it due to the necessity of having an external audit. He opines that this is an extremely costly operation and this should be changed for internal audit.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola responds that although all the documentation that Federations send to FIDE is useful for better planning and also acknowledging their compliance with Article 11 of FIDE Charter, audits are not the mandatory part if they are not existent in Federation. All surveys are welcome and highly expected even if some documents/information is missing.

FIDE Social initiatives 2023 and onwards. Thinking out of the box at zonal level.

Mr. Voigtlin introduces the Social Commission which exists for more than four years and has a team of 12 active members and mentions great support of Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola. He presents Social projects and welcomes Zones' participation in them. He also urges to create social commissions in the federations.

He provides some statistics in respect of the number of chess players and global reach for chess in person and online and stresses that Chess has also very important impact in social life and is more than sports as it helps to develop the personality. He provides details of various FIDE special projects in different countries, within the framework of "chess for protection" and "chess for peace" programmes. He underlines great collaborations with the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess and thanks Ms. Sorokina for the cooperation and great work. Mr. Voigtlin further introduces three new projects of the Social Commission: chess for the elderly, chess for addicts and children of slums, which are pilot projects alongside the Commission's flagship projects "chess for prisons", where a perfect cooperation with the Chicago County in the USA has been noted for several years in a row. He requests assistance from Zonal Presidents to embrace more countries in this project which allows to reduce depressions, recidivism and aggression and help integration into society. The other significant projects mentioned under this section are Chess for people with disabilities and Infinite chess for the children with ASD disorder.

Mr. Voigtlin opines that social projects should be integrated and customised for the 2024 FIDE100 programme by embracing more social groups into the jubilee celebration. He also announces that the Chess for Freedom programme has been submitted for an Anthem Award for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and he hopes that FIDE will win it. Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola opines that this award would be one of the highlights for FIDE.

The report of the Social Commission receives warm welcome and words of appreciation and gratitude from the attendees. Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola underlines that Zones should be proactive and apply with their social project initiatives for the Development Fund allocation.

Awarding direct titles to zonal events.

Ms. Namangale, Zonal President for 4.5. of Africa presents her proposal on Awarding direct titles to zonal events as she opines that this would be a very good motivation tool for the players. She makes reference to current difficulties being experienced by the African Zones in finding organisers for the Zonal events, resulting in the lack of the players' motivation in participation.

Mr. Press from the Qualification Commission says that he is baffled as the Zonal events do award titles and asks the explanation.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola says that only those events which provide qualifiers for the World Chess Cups award titles. She adds that this matter has been discussed previously but no changes so far deemed necessary.

Mr. Dvorkovich comments that the places for the World Chess Cup have been assigned to African Continental Championships directly, leaving Zones aside and opines that maybe the Qualification Commission should make changes in the respective regulations.

Mr. Press opines that the issue of direct titles for zonal tournaments is something the African Chess Federation has to deal with.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola agrees that if the Continent wants to motivate Zones and players, they should agree that the Zonal events provides qualification and thus is entitled to titles. She asks Ms. Namangale to confirm that she intends to proceed with this motion which requires the consent of the Zonal Council to go to the FIDE Council for a decision.

Mr. Plotkin opines there is no need for more direct titles for zonal tournaments, as there are enough incentives for players to participate in zonal tournaments. He gives an example of awarding titles in World junior and senior Championships, where it is possible to get an IM title while not playing against any IMs. He proposes stricter regulations in this respect.

Mr. Press comments that the Qualification Commission always welcomes all proposals and replies accordingly. He underlines that the purpose of the Zonal tournament is to provide qualifiers for the World Cups and not to generate titles.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola further comments that there are other purposes of the Zonal tournaments also, as chess players come to participate and get rating points and receive titles, not necessarily direct ones.

Ms. Namangale opines that the Qualification Commission should engage with Federations in capacity building in respect of this matter. Mr. Press agrees.

Mr. Ameku from Zone 2.2. concurs with Ms. Namangale and states the Continent has taken all the direct titles and Zones do not award titles resulting in serious problems for such Zones. He requests the support for the African Zones regarding this matter.

Mr. Carillo, President of the Americas Chess Confederation, supports the proposal of Ms. Namangale and mentions the American Continent's discussions with the Qualification Commission regarding various issues.

The proposal of Ms. Namangale has been noted but due to the insufficient support to send it as the Zonal Council proposal addressed to the FIDE Council, it will be discussed at the Continental levels.

Establishment of Zonal Executive Committees.

Ms. Namangale presents her second proposal in respect of the Establishment of Zonal Executive Committee for each Zone. She opines that the provision regarding the Establishment of Zonal Executive Committee should be included into the respective Statutes, to ensure transparency in the management of zonal matters and sustainability of the zonal affairs. She states that currently the Zonal structure is not clear and sometimes the Zones are avoided in a decision-making process. She also mentions that Zones in Africa do not have bank accounts.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola thanks Ms. Namangale for her proposals and inquires what stops all Zonal Presidents to discuss with their respective members the establishment of a formal or informal body to run the affairs in the zone.

Ms. Namangale responds that she wishes this structure to be formally approved. Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola adds that it is clear that if this proposal is formalised, more Zones will think of creating such structures within their organisations.

Mr. Priest opines that this structure is not necessary for one-nation Zones as in these cases, a Federation serves most of the functions.

Mr. Priest adds from the perspective of the Verification Commission member that any initiative, which does not need FIDE to send money to the personal bank accounts, should be encouraged.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola concurs and states that this practice has been nearly eliminated and nowadays, money is sent to people's personal bank accounts only in exceptional situations and with a further strict supervision. In case of Zonal tournaments, for example, the funds would be sent to a Federation-organiser's account, if there is no other option.

Mr. Press informs that Zone 3.6. has introduced the Zonal Committee and welcomes anyone to see the Zone 3.6. Statutes and invites to copy the document.

Ms. Lopang, President of the African Chess Federation, agrees that for Zonal tournaments the funds should be sent directly to the organising Federation. She also adds that Federations should be in control of their management, but of course single nations zones have their own structures, e.g. China, India or Russia.

Mr. Ameku supports the proposal of Ms. Namangale and invites the zones with multiple countries to support it also.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola thanks Ms. Namangale for her initiatives and proposals but notes that there is a lack of required support to the proposal to include it into obligatory administrative structure.

Mr. Carlos Rivero Gonzalez comments that Zone 2.3. consists of 30 countries and mentions constraints in the zone. He wishes to discuss the zone structure, especially in regard of giving titles as future changes might affect his zone unfavourably and demotivate it from organising tournaments. He requests the Continental President to discuss this matter with the FIDE President and members of the zone. He thanks the FIDE President, Commissions and everyone for an exceptional work.

Mr. Dvorkovich agrees to having a discussion to find a solution in respect of Zone 2.3.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola comments that if the size of a zone creates difficulty, the Continent can come with an initiative to propose to FIDE a revision of the structure.

On another note, she mentions that at this meeting due to the lack of the quorum, with 13 zones present out of 32, further no formal voting is possible. She suggests that the Management Board can take an initiative and send out a survey to all Zones asking to express the opinion on if a requirement to install formal administrative structures would be supported and then to prepare a motion to the FIDE Council if it happens to be necessary.

Ms. Namangale agrees but adds that a quorum is desirable.

Mr. Dvorkovich says the lack of quorum does not exhaust possibilities for a productive discussion. He adds that most of the multi-country zones who wish to receive financial support from FIDE, will be willing to establish a proposed structure.

The Council agrees on this suggested way forward as proposed by Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola.

FIDE 100 Anniversary: events/activities for zones to join.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola makes a presentation of the FIDE 100 Anniversary project. She explains the historic meaning of the date of the 20th of July 2024 when the agreement was signed to form FIDE.

She highlights the main points of the project and underlines the link between chess and FIDE, specifically the aim of the entire project which is engaging chess community and non-chess circles, in order to raise the awareness about chess and FIDE. Towards this end, FIDE has created a special branding to be provided for those individuals, private organisers and National Federations, Zones and Continents who will be organising events the next year. She encourages the organisers to use this branding in 2024 for their events, as part of the celebration and demonstrates some examples of such branding. She announces a dedicated email address fide100@fide.com and two slogans: “A century for chess” and “The game is just beginning”.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola outlines main elements of the programme:

- 100 days before the celebration 100 facts about chess will be published on FIDE Social Media
- Several exhibitions in various countries will be organised
- A digital chess museum will be established.
- FIDE chess torch relay, starting in February 2024 in India (India-Switzerland-UAE-Morocco-France-Mexico-Hungary) and finishing at the Chess Olympiad 2024 will be launched.
- Guinness World Record on 20th July 2024 will be attempted.
- FIDE Golden Book (3rd edition) with Mr. Iclicki in charge of it will be published. Each Federation will get a copy of the book.
- FIDE Jubilee Book – a gift edition, in pictures will also be published.
- Photo Book – chess as a life style, with various popular people will be published.
- A special FIDE100 anniversary stamp will be issued in Switzerland, inaugurated on 7th April 2024, at the initiative of the Swiss Chess Federation.
- Tournaments and festivals will be integrated into the Jubilee programme where all organisers are welcome to submit their proposals.
- Social, educational, women’s conferences dedicated on FIDE100 anniversary will be held.
- Special Awards for 100th anniversary in various categories will be presented. An evaluation Committee to be set up shortly.
- Celebration locations were announced: *Paris*, 20th July 2024 with a replica of 1924 FIDE founding event; chess games exhibitions at Chateau d’Asnieres; torch ceremonies; Gardens of Luxembourg for chess exhibitions; *Budapest* – various locations, including opening and closing ceremonies; *Bern*, – at the Bundesplatz, with many celebrations; New Delhi, India – various events; *Almaty*, *Abu Dhabi*, alongside with their traditional chess festival; *Casablanca*- a historical chess tournament recreating historical chess positions; *Cancun* – an

underwater chess match and torch relay; *Quebec*- a chess festival, with simultaneous seances, living chess game.

- Vast geographical spread of the events, depending on the organisers' initiatives.
- Readiness of FIDE to provide some organisers with financial support for further visibility of their events dedicated to FIDE100.
- New FIDE awards will be introduced for FIDE100.

Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola welcomes all proposals and comments in respect of FIDE 100 Anniversary programme.

Mr. Freyd thanks Mrs. Reizniece-Ozola for the presentation.