



International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER – JULY 2007

Introduction

Although only three months have passed since my election in Tunis, a lot has happened. This newsletter continues a tradition established by my predecessor, Jos Mulder, and seeks to provide all members of the INAS family with a regular, 3-monthly report on developments of mutual interest. In between times, I also provide monthly reports to the INAS Executive and I do my best to cope with the ever-increasing volume of e-mail traffic.

INAS Executive

Our first meeting, which took place immediately after the General Assembly in Tunis, was followed on 14 July by an all-day meeting hosted by our new Secretary General, Karon Nicol, at the Mencap office in Birmingham, England. Our discussions were wide-ranging and, in different ways, covered most of the information contained in this newsletter. When we left Tunis, there were three positions unfilled: regional representatives for Africa and the Middle East and the Eligibility Officer position vacated by Jennifer Mactavish. The Executive has identified three individuals that it wishes to co-opt to these positions and I hope to be able to confirm their acceptance, if not sooner, in my next newsletter.

Technical Committee

Despite the earlier practice of organising joint meetings of the Executive and Technical Committees, I have decided that their *raison d'être* is sufficiently different to warrant separate meetings with contrasting agendas. Each committee will continue to meet twice yearly but, in future, only every second meeting will provide an opportunity for both groups to come together and discuss matters of common interest. I look forward to receiving reports of what I am sure will be lively and constructive meetings of the INAS Technical Committee in due course.

Sports Development

Although INAS-FID's primary pre-occupation is elite performance and sporting competition on a world stage, there will be no long-term future for INAS or its championship programme, if it does not also concern itself with the identification and development of young athletes and the provision of opportunities for local, national and regional competition. I am not yet sure how this initiative will unfold ... we may need a new Sports Development Committee ... but, in the meantime, I have asked Geoff Smedley, the President of INAS Europe, to discuss the matter with other regional representatives and to revert to the INAS Executive with recommendations.

Eligibility and Registration

Quite apart from its political sensitivity (our relationship with IPC is featured below), these hugely important processes have been complicated even more in the past few weeks and months by the need to transfer records, systems and knowledge from SUH in Sweden to our new Secretariat in England. A little later than expected, a delegation from SUH arrived in Birmingham on 17 May and, over a couple of days, all responsibility for these matters was passed from SUH to the Secretariat. This has represented a huge learning curve for Karon Nicol, but she has coped remarkably well and there is every indication that the worst is over and that an efficient and effective service will be in place very soon. In the meantime, I would ask for patience and understanding and, on behalf of everyone at INAS, I would like to extend thanks and appreciation to SUH for all their efforts during a period of intense scrutiny and political uncertainty.

IPC and the Paralympic Games

During the period before my election, the INAS Executive had reacted to the wishes of its General Assembly by extending a formal invitation to IPC to place their 'difference of opinion' in the hands of a third party, preferably the Council of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), and by advising IPC, albeit reluctantly, of a determination to proceed to legal action through the German courts if this invitation were declined. Since my election, I have spoken with my two predecessors (Jos Mulder and Bernard Atha), with the new Executive, with INAS lawyers and with representatives of IPC and, at all times, I have been at pains to communicate my own views as clearly and as consistently as possible.

Briefly, my position is as follows: (i) the present situation is unacceptable; (ii) by now, almost seven years on from the original 'incident' in Sydney, the problem should have been resolved; (iii) as a new President with an eye to the future, I have no interest whatsoever in looking backwards and re-playing all the arguments that have been rehearsed previously; (iv) INAS and IPC should indeed avail themselves of the services of CAS, even if only to resolve the Beijing dispute; and (v) having done so, INAS and IPC should turn their attention to the longer-term goal of returning INAS athletes to their rightful position within the competitive structures of all future Paralympic Games.

For the avoidance of doubt, let me close this part of my report by giving added emphasis to two personal observations on the current INAS/IPC 'dispute': (i) since my election, I have received nothing but encouragement from IPC (and from within INAS) and a commitment by IPC to taking whatever steps are necessary to obtain the desired outcome of full INAS participation in future Paralympic Games; and (ii) no matter what the outcome of our more immediate efforts regarding the Beijing Games, I see nothing but harm and damage (to all concerned on both sides of the argument) emanating from the prosecution by INAS of any court action against IPC. Unless and until I am required to do otherwise, I will commit myself unreservedly to a course of action that is intended to keep INAS within the Paralympic family and to doing so in a way that does not lead to our exclusion or ostracisation by other members of that family. I sincerely believe that sufficient goodwill exists on both sides to make this possible and I hope that all INAS members will join me in looking forward to a better future within IPC.

Special Olympics

As many of you will know already, this summer will see Special Olympics World Summer Games taking place in Shanghai, China. I have already accepted an invitation to attend and I will be using this opportunity to build upon the memorandum of understanding negotiated so many years ago by the then INAS President, Bernard Atha. I recognise and understand that our two organisations have different philosophies, but there is so much common purpose that a closer relationship, including free and frank exchange of views and occasional collaboration on matters of mutual interest, must surely be advantageous to both parties.

INAS World Championships

The remainder of 2007 will see INAS world championships in the following sports: swimming, taking place in Belgium on 19-26 August; athletics, taking place in Brazil on 16-23 September; and futsal, taking place in Portugal on 07-13 October. I am sure that we can look forward to some exciting competition in all three sports and I wish the organisers, the competitors and their support staff every success.

Global Games

The hope that INAS Global Games might be held in Japan during 2009 has not entirely dissipated, but there is sufficient doubt about its viability for the INAS Executive to have invited expressions of interest from other member nations by the original deadline of 30 September. Please contact the Technical Officer, the Secretary General or myself if you are considering a bid. In any event, we will advise all members of the final situation as soon as further information becomes available.

INAS Handbook

One of the concerns that I have, as a relative newcomer to INAS, is the difficulty that accompanies any decision to check the precise wording of any INAS policy, process or procedure. As such, I am immensely grateful to Tony Guihot and Jos Mulder for their willingness to pull together as much information as possible in the form of a new, comprehensive and up-to-date INAS Handbook. This is unlikely to be available as a single document until 2008, but individual sections will be made available to all members as and when they are produced.

INAS Website

The content of the INAS website has now been transferred to the Mencap server and we are now waiting on SUH to 'configure the domain to the server' (whatever that means). This should be done over the next few days, after which it will be possible for the Secretariat to begin updating the website as required. In the meantime, it may be useful for all INAS members to note the following e-mail addresses:

- for registrations – inasregistrations@mencap.org.uk
- for general INAS business – inas-fid@mencap.org.uk.

Strategic Planning

During the INAS conference that took place in Tunis, various recommendations were made that, taken together, should enable INAS to produce a coherent and comprehensive

strategic plan. For the benefit of all INAS members and especially those who were not in Tunis, I will shortly be sending out a questionnaire inviting comments on each of the main points raised at the Tunis conference. Please find the time to complete this questionnaire, so that our strategic plans are truly reflective of the wishes of the entire INAS membership.

Summary

I hope that this report on progress to date since Tunis is useful and that my use of English is accessible even to those who are more accustomed to communicating in some other language. In the future, it would be good to see INAS reports available in different languages, but the costs are prohibitive. In the meantime, please let me know if there are any ways whereby these newsletters can be made more useful, more interesting and more accessible. By the time I prepare the next one, there will have been INAS world championships in swimming and athletics and I will have met both with the IPC Governing Board in Rio and with the Special Olympics leadership in Shanghai. Once again, there should be a lot to report.

With best wishes ...

Bob Price
INAS President