

## **Opening Speech FIS President to the 47th FIS Congress in Antalya**

Welcome to all delegates of the National Ski Associations, Committee Members, representatives of the media and the sponsors to the 47<sup>th</sup> International Ski Congress in Antalya.

Before we start with the statutory proceedings of our Congress, I have the honour to give the floor to the President of the Turkish Ski Federation – our host association – Mr. Ayik Özer.

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Thank you Mr. President for your kind words, your great support in the organisation of this Congress with approximately 1'000 participants here in Antalya and particularly thank you for the warm welcome we all have received here in Turkey.

I wish you and all collaborators of your Association a lot of success with your athletes and your teams for the coming years, as well as for the great plans you have for the future development of skiing in your country.

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When a few dedicated skiers met 100 years ago on February 18, 1910 in Norway in Kristiania – as Oslo was called until 1923 – to form the International Ski Commission, they for sure could not even in their wildest dreams imagine that 100 years later 1'000 participants would gather for an International Ski Congress in Turkey and that their Federation would have 110 affiliated nations organising every year more than 6'000 international ski competitions on all 5 continents.

Even in 1924 in Chamonix when the International Ski Commission became the Fédération Internationale de Ski, nobody could imagine that skiing would become a social phenomenon in many countries of this world and would change in numerous regions the way of life and also the economy, particularly of mountain farmers.

Today, 100 years later, I have the honour to welcome you officially to the 47<sup>th</sup> International Ski Congress in Antalya.

After a very successful FIS Congress in the year 1988 in Istanbul, it is only for the second time in the history of skiing that the world-wide ski family gathers in Turkey for a Congress week with about 100 official meetings.

The Congress in Antalya is of great significance for the future of our sport, focussing the further development of the sport of skiing and the direction of the International Ski Federation with all its facets in order to achieve the desired success for which everyone is striving in a modern and innovative form also in the coming years and decades.

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In all modesty I can say that the last 2 years since our Congress in Cape Town in South Africa in 2008 have been quite successful for our sport in the northern as well as in the southern hemisphere.

Outstanding World Championships in all our disciplines during the winter season 2008/2009 – the Alpine Events in Val d'Isère, France; the Nordic World Ski Championships in Liberec, Czech Republic; the Snowboarders in Gangwon, South Korea; the Freestyle competitions in Inawashiro, Japan; the Ski Flying World Championships in 2010 in Planica, Slovenia and of course not to forget the Junior World Championships in all the FIS disciplines carried out successfully in both winters since our last Congress in Cape Town and then of course the outstanding total of more than 12'000 international competitions – more than 6'000 each winter – listed in the International Ski Calendar with a total of 660 World Cup competitions and more than 200 Continental Cup events during these 2 years – all those events during relatively short winter seasons of the 2 hemispheres.

Unforgettable of course just a few weeks ago the Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver, which after many years of worries and doubts proved to have been from a sports point of view in spite of the weather conditions excellent Games including outstanding and unforgettable performances from our athletes.

For those present and working in Vancouver and particularly for the media representatives and spectators the Games were for sure not easy, but for the millions of TV spectators at home the Games including for the first time our new event Skicross were very spectacular and the IOC judgement at the closing ceremony of “excellent and very friendly Games” was appropriate.

All the events and their success mean yet more pleasing records for the overall activities of the International Ski Federation during the period between 2 Congresses.

Nevertheless quantity does not automatically mean quality and certainly shortcomings in the organisation had of course also to be mentioned during the last 2 years and our aim is now to rectify those shortcomings for the next competition seasons.

In general, however, it can be said that the work of an excellent standard was accomplished, particularly for those events that were broadcasted on TV which has remained stable in global terms or has even seen a slight increase.

Even though there are certain core countries, where the performance of active athletes has diminished and this has automatically led to major reductions in viewer and spectator figures. On the other hand upcoming new countries have been in general able to close this gap.

The commercial side of FIS is an area that demands continuous attention to compete in the marketplace for television exposure, sponsorship as well as promoting and marketing of our sport. As a consequence FIS Marketing AG was officially set up at the end of August 2009, with FIS as majority owner of the company set up together with minority shareholders Tridem Sports and Infront Sports & Media.

Another key task with the commercial activities during the period just concluded, has been the tender process for the television and marketing rights to the FIS World Ski Championships in the Alpine and Nordic Events in 2015 and 2017. After a six month tender period during which three offers were considered, FIS has agreed to extend the long-term partnership with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Whilst the revenues are between 8 and 9% reduced compared to the previous contract, our advisors were convinced that the stability offered by this deal in these turbulent economic times is important and the sums that the Organising Committees will receive are still significant in order to organise world-class events.

Additionally, FIS awarded the television rights to the FIS Ski Flying World Championships in 2010 and 2012 to the EBU, whilst the rights for the FIS Freestyle and Snowboard World Championships in 2011 and 2013 were granted to a new agency (for FIS) Sunset & Vine that appears to have brought a fresh approach and competition to the market.

On the negative side, the number of serious injuries remains a matter of concern to the International Ski Federation and the further development of the Injury Surveillance System has been prioritised. In addition to the research element carried out by the Oslo Sports Trauma Research Centre, the University of Salzburg is collaborating on the project, specifically working on potential measures which may lead to a reduction in the risk of injury. A significant and positive aspect moving forwards is that the ski industry has joined forces to work with the FIS ISS to become involved with the project.

There are undoubtedly many challenges facing FIS and its member National Ski Associations on an ongoing basis and it is crucial that our organisation is strong and united in order to best cope with these. The FIS family has always relied on open exchange and collaboration amongst its members, as we strive together to work in the best interests of the sport. Different opinions and ideas are natural and indeed healthy for the impetus of the organisation, but let us keep these within the organisation to try to improve and develop our sport.

As it has become a tradition, all main decisions and the various activities of the FIS and skiing in general of the last 2 years were published every Wednesday of the year through the FIS Newsflash – 104 editions – as well as through the FIS Bulletin, which was issued in 2008 and 2009 in the format of a yearbook and traditionally all National Ski Associations affiliated to the FIS as well as the Committees received twice yearly short summaries of the Council meetings.

We should, however, not only look back on what we have achieved during the last years, but we should rather look forward to what expects us in the coming months and years and in this respect I would – as at the last Congress – once again like to highlight several activities and special concerns to our Federation and to our sport:

- the world-wide development and global participation in competitive ski sport and particularly in recreational skiing;
- the never ending fight against doping and manipulation with the FIS as one of the recognised leaders in this fight;

- an optimisation of the World Cups and Continental Cups as well as international competitions in our different disciplines;
- healthy finances of the International Ski Federation and the affiliated National Ski Associations;
- a world-wide campaign and project for the future of our sport by bringing children to the snow;

The FIS philosophy is and shall never be to work for the financial benefit for only a few organisations of very few National Ski Associations, but for the benefit of all National Ski Associations world-wide and the development of our sport as such.

This of course is, as I said often before, in line with my very personal philosophy that we shall generate money for the sport and not from the sport.

At the last Congress I proudly informed you that thanks to successful financial results a unique project to support all affiliated National Member Associations with significant amounts would be offered to you, although mentioning that such special distribution could most probably not be repeated in future.

Today here in Antalya I am even more proud to announce to you that this special distribution and help for the world-wide promotion of skiing will be repeated, although we had to significantly decrease our reserves, but we believe that our National Ski Associations are in those times of a financial crisis in need of a substantial financial support from the FIS. Our Vice-Chairman of the Finance Commission will of course inform you in detail later on today. However, such a special distribution to the National Ski Associations will only be possible if the Congress today finds realistic solutions concerning finances and division of income.

At this time I would like to be short with my information, as on your table you find a very detailed printed report – a copy of which was already sent to you in April – on our activities during the last 2 years.

Having said so, I declare the 47<sup>th</sup> International Ski Congress officially open.