



CISM Blows 60 candles

63rd General Assembly and Congress

BY OLIVIER VERHELLE
PHOTOS BY DIRK DE VOS

Once upon a time, five countries came up with a vision at the end of a military fencing tournament in Nice, France. The vision of an organisation that would serve peace; an organisation with a global ambition to bring together military athletes on sports- rather than battlefields; an organisation whose aim would be to promote both world-class sporting performance and the practice of physical education at grassroots

level in the military throughout the world, thereby also serving the ideal of friendship through sport.

The obstacles to such an effort seemed so overwhelming that barely anyone would have bet a single penny on the success of this endeavour. Well, sixty years later, CISM – since CISM is indeed the organisation in point – is still alive and very much kicking! And the least we can write

is that the baby has grown indeed! Its five founding members have turned into 131 Member Nations at present and the few sport events organised annually in the early years have become an average of 20 military world championships and around one hundred continental and regional competitions annually – not counting many more bilateral events.



To know **where you are** going, you need to know **where you come from**

This week in Montreux provided many CISM elders with an opportunity to share their memories, and while some of them were deeply emotional and others quite funny, they were all very proud. So, CISM wanted to bring together its former managers to celebrate its 60th anniversary. Well, they ALL answered the call! You cannot imagine how enjoyable it was to see our past presidents, Secretaries General and other historical men and women again... Women of course, because behind every male historical figure, there is a remarkable woman. First among them in the case of CISM is Madame Marie-Louise Mollet, of course. No need to introduce the lady who was the wife of Chevalier Raoul Mollet, founding father of CISM and its Secretary General for

more than 30 years. This lady lived and breathed for CISM every day (indeed, her own private house was the General Secretariat for some time back then) and saw it thrive and grow in recognition. She has become a grandmother of sorts to us all.

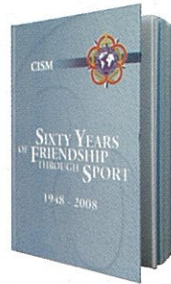
The enthusiasm generated by this trip down memory lane led the CISM Board of Directors to finance production of the first book to recount the first 60 years of CISM history. And once again, CISM called upon two of its old hands: General Arthur Zechner (former President of CISM) and



General Arthur Zechner
Colonel Roger Van Meerbeeck

Colonel Roger Van Meerbeeck (former Chief of the Belgian Delegation) to write these memoirs. The result of their work exceeds all expectations. A superb book in two languages (English and French) was presented as a gift to the Delegations and other CISM authorities. It can also be ordered on our website. Capitalising on this success, the Board also earmarked funding for a CISM Museum – more on this initiative later.

Sixty years... Time does indeed go by very fast!



Past Presidents, Secretaries General and other historical men and women of CISM



Colourful Ceremonies and **Cultural Initiatives**

Whenever Switzerland comes up in a conversation, people promptly conjure a few images and clichés: cheese, mountains and cows with alpine horn music, Lake Lemman and the IOC in the background. Well, the organisers of the 63rd General Assembly and Congress helped perpetuate these by mixing a bit of all the above when putting together the cultural programme. This year, rather than taking us on a day-long trip of cultural discovery, our

Swiss friends worked out three very special initiatives, the first of which took us to the picturesque mountain village of Champéry. Following a walk down the steep narrow streets offering magnificent views, we were treated to an alpine horn concert followed by the traditional raclette – a selection of mountain cheese melts poured over jacket potatoes. Sharing this most convivial of meals among friends in an enchanting setting was a real treat!

Great Pump at the Opening Ceremony!



CISM President, General Golla with Dr Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee

Because of the 60th anniversary of CISM, this year's Opening Ceremony combined pump and solemnity. General Andrey, Commanding officer of the Swiss Army, presided over an Opening Ceremony whose standing was further enhanced by the presence of Dr Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee, who very much honoured us when he agreed to attend this celebration of our 60th anniversary. In his opening speech, Dr Rogge was keen to recall that he personally took part in several CISM events when he was young and that the elegance and sound reasoning that were hallmarks of Chevalier Raoul Nollet definitely influenced his career choices. He thanked CISM for its constant efforts to build a better world and reaffirmed the IOC commitment in support of CISM and all its activities. The «Fanfare école de recrue 16/1/08», conducted by Cpt Max Schenk accompanied the various speeches to the sound of Vivaldi's Four Seasons. The Swiss Delegation – in cooperation with the

Communication Section of the CISM General Secretariat – had produced a video and picture sequence that was long applauded. In the space of just six minutes, this audiovisual presentation sought to review the key sporting successes of CISM. Congratulations are in order for the Swiss on this wonderful initiative! Mr André Bugnon, President of the Swiss National Council, was the last – but by no means the least – speaker to convey to us the impressions of the Swiss when it comes to the prominent role that sport can and should play in our ever-changing world. This flawless Ceremony will live on in the memory of everyone present in Bern on 7 May 2008.

The second cultural event took place immediately after the Opening Ceremony in Bern. All participants got on a sightseeing train for a trip across the mountains to Montreux. There were sights around every bend and tunnel exit. Every panorama appearing before our eyes was equally beautiful and we even came close to

touching the snow-covered mountain tops.

Planes, cars, trains... only boats were missing from the list of modes of transport. Well, they were added in the afternoon of Saturday 10 May when we boarded the cruise ship connecting Montreux to Lausanne. This trip on Lake Lemman offered a few moments' relaxation going with the stream. Our one-day sailors discovered the magnificent "Lavaux" – Swiss vines planted on the steep slopes around the lake. Having made landfall, the participants then visited the Olympic Museum in Lausanne and (re)discovered the most beautiful art featuring the sports and athletes represented in the Olympic Movement.

From the above, it is clear that the Swiss Delegation spared no effort in preparing this 63rd General Assembly and Congress. They set a very high standard indeed!

The CISM Flag Decorated for the First Time

The Swiss Armed Forces honoured CISM by officially awarding our flag the highest military medal of the Swiss Armed Forces. This was the very first time that the CISM Flag received such an award... and hopefully not the last!



Board of Directors Meeting Lausanne, Switzerland 7 May 2008



CISM Invites Itself to the IOC Headquarters

The first session of the CISM Board of Directors took place in the Pierre de Coubertin room at the seat of the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne, Switzerland. On the initiative of Mr Urs Lacotte, IOC Director General, our Board met in the very room in which the IOC has taken its most momentous decisions. In the temporary headquarters of CISM, everything breathed professionalism. This place steeped in history is also very modern: its hi-tech offices and working atmosphere encourage everyone to excel themselves.

Mr Urs Lacotte honoured us with an exhaustive introduction to the international organisation of the IOC, which showed us that CISM can claim to have a system that, in its way and on its own scale, compares in many respects with that of the IOC. Following this presentation, Mr Lacotte took some time to give CISM advice on how to further grow without leaving the less-favoured on the margins of our organisation. Also explored were different avenues to strengthen cooperation between the IOC and CISM.

The Board of Directors then went to work, focusing mainly on the different items on the agenda that related to the General Assembly and Congress. The last few points in need of clarification were settled, the various contributions from the continents and CISM commissions and committees were reviewed. And soon it was time for the General Assembly meeting to start.



Mr Urs Lacotte, IOC Director General

Interactivity : The Key Word of Our International Congress

Humanitarian initiatives and peacekeeping activities: a practical mission for sport! The main theme of the congress set the tone. Three speakers of international stature made presentations. The first was Mr Pat McQuaid, President of the International Cycling Union, who presented the different existing cycling-based development assistance programmes and emphasised the federating and multi-cultural role of cycling. Then came H.E. Fred Tanner, Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, who for his part presented a geopolitical analysis of the different military crises currently facing humankind. He then introduced a few successful initiatives leveraging sport as a communication vehicle and a factor for

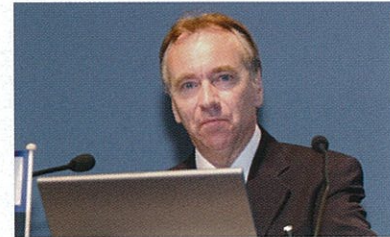
integration and unity. The last speaker to take to the podium on Thursday 8 May 2008 was Mr Tommy Gandah Sithole, IOC Director of International Cooperation and Development, who had already worked with CISM on the Sport and Peace seminars held in Mantova (2005) and Hyderabad (2007). As talented speaker, he offered several practical avenues for cooperation between CISM and the IOC and in his conclusion, he officially invited CISM to take up these challenges.

CISM could then have chosen the easy path during the Q&A session and simply listened passively to a few testimonials. But that was not to be. Quite the opposite, in fact: the participants were all challenged to contribute in continental breakout sessions gathering the Chiefs of Delegations, react to the arguments of the three speakers and offer some initial answers. The Vice-Presidents then reported the gist of each continent's thinking in a plenary session of the General Assembly. The President of CISM and its Board of Directors took careful notes as the

different continents presented their initiatives and the odds are that many of them will somehow be mainstreamed into CISM practice.



Mr Pat McQuaid



H.E. Fred Tanner



Mr Tommy Gandah Sithole



A Short Look in the Rear View Mirror and Then... On To **2011**

A sizeable part of our internal Congress was dedicated to a debriefing of the 2007 Military World Games held in Hyderabad and to a presentation of the next edition scheduled in Rio de Janeiro in 2011. The Indian Delegation to CISM presented its review of the 2007 Games. The part of their presentation dedicated to "lessons learned and suggestions" was undoubtedly one of the most instructive; the Brazilian Delegation self-evidently

listened to this advice very carefully. This review of the 2007 Games also represented an opportunity to hark back to the extraordinary and successful Indian adventure. For the first time in the CISM General Assembly history, the Brazilian Delegation had organized a videoconference linking the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Montreux during 30 minutes. The Minister of Defence of Brazil delivered a warm address to the General Assembly and then,

together with our President, he launched the official Website of the 5th CISM Military World Games: www.rio2011.com.br The Chief of the Brazilian Delegation, Brigadier General Luis Antonio Pinto Machado then took us on a virtual trip to Rio to discover the diverse modalities of the Games and the main aspects of the organization of the 5th edition of our Games. Still 3 years to wait...

The President Urges Member Countries to Open to the Outside World



When it comes to sponsorship and partnership, we would be mistaken to think that CISM can continue to exist in isolation; our organisation must manage to conclude commercial agreements with international companies in order to both conduct its internal business and promote its activities. In this context, our President spoke up and conveyed in no uncertain terms to our Member Nations the message that despite its 60 years of existence –or perhaps because of

them–, CISM urgently needs to modernise how it talks with sponsors and external partners. Budgeting issues are considered to be ever more significant within every national –and consequently, every international– sport federation. We have reached a turning point in our history. Therefore, a substantial number of Delegations, our Members, need to change approach-

es when it comes to this concept. Why should we fail where so many others have succeeded ? Some of our Delegations have extraordinarily effective sponsorship policies. The onus is on us to evolve and take up this new gauntlet!

“ Why should we fail where so many others have succeeded ? ”



The Democratic Nature of our General Assembly is Enforced

The CISM General Assembly proper was held on the morning of Saturday, 10 May. The Chiefs of Delegations unanimously approved the CISM accounts and budgets, thereby demonstrating that our new Treasurer General (elected last year) took over in the best possible way from Colonel André Therry (Ret.), who was our Treasurer General for 21 years. Congratulations, Colonel Van Velthoven... and all the best!

In addition to these financial decision files, the General Assembly approved a proposal to enlarge our Board of Directors. From a present membership of 14 plus the President, it will henceforth comprise 18 members – i.e. one more per continent (5 for Africa, 4 for America, 4 for Asia and 5 for Europe) – plus the President who obviously represents no continent as such. These additional Board members will be elected at the next General Assembly meeting in Surinam. However, a large majority of the General Assembly meeting

rejected a decision file submitted by the Board of Directors for the purpose of amending the procedures for electing the CISM Secretary General. This decision shows that the principles of democracy are strictly enforced within our organisation.

As for elections, congratulations are in order for Colonel Hamad Kalkaba Malbom (Cameroon), re-elected to the Vice-Presidency of CISM for Africa; Colonel Honoré Naberé Traoré (Burkina Faso), re-elected as representative for Africa on the Board of Directors; and General Dr Benzianne Meguedad (Algeria), the most recent addition to the Board. Worth noting is that General Naef Serhal (Lebanon), CISM Vice-President for Asia, put an end to his term in office; the Board co-opted General Saleh Alswat (Saudi Arabia) to fill the vacant seat for one year. Commodore Joshi (India) was also co-opted to represent Asia on the Board for a year.



**2 New Member Nations,
2 New Flags Hoisted...
2 New Friends in Sport**

This General Assembly provided the first opportunity to meet the representatives of the two new CISM Member Nations: Malta and Montenegro. On this occasion, the General Secretariat decided to restore an old tradition: before the beginning of the General Assembly, the flags of both Malta and Montenegro were brought in the meeting room and placed amidst those of the other countries in attendance; an emotional and proud moment for the representatives of these two newcomers who have already captured the spirit of our organization. We are all looking forward to meeting them and their best athletes during our competitions.

**Goodbye
Montreux...
Welcome
Paramaribo**

Colonel Hussainali, the colourful Chief of the Surinamese Delegation to CISM, taught us quite a great deal about his Latin American country, which will host the 64th General Assembly and Congress of CISM in May 2009. This next meeting of our organisation will be an opportunity to train the spotlight on America and more specifically on an extremely dynamic CISM region, and also one that is so close to the values of our founding fathers. In a

sense, CISM is coming full circle. Let us once again thank the Swiss Armed Forces, the Swiss Delegation to CISM, the region of Montreux and the Cantons of Valais and Vaud as well as the many people who directly or indirectly contributed to the success of our 63rd General Assembly and Congress. Thanks are once again in order for Switzerland for so brilliantly embodying our motto: Friendship through Sport!