

39th WORLD SCOUT CONFERENCE

PRESENTATION ON GOVERNANCE

(Wahid Labidi)

Introduction

Good morning, fellow Scouters.

During the last two triennia, the governance of WOSM has been under review.

GRTF1

Shortly after the World Scout Conference in Tunisia in 2005 the World Scout Committee, in response to Resolution 7/05, set up a Governance Review Task Force. That Resolution welcomed the proposal to conduct a comprehensive review of the governance of WOSM during the forthcoming triennium and asked the World Scout Committee to set up that task force to conduct the review, in full transparency, and report regularly to the World Committee and to NSOs.

The first GRTF – as it became known – presented its report in time for the World Scout Conference in 2008 – though it must be said that some of the events of that triennium (which have come to be known as "the crisis") had a serious impact on the work of the task force and may, in some ways, have distracted it from its primary task of taking a cool, detached look at the way in which WOSM is governed. Be that as it may, the World Scout Committee received the report, accepted virtually all of the task force's recommendations, made a commitment to implement those that fell within its authority to do so, and referred to the last World Scout Conference those recommendations which required amendments to the WOSM Constitution. It is greatly to the credit of the last Conference that, despite the complexity of the constitutional changes that were proposed, we finished up with a new Constitution which has worked well.

GRTF2

However, even at the last Conference in Korea, it was recognised that the work of the Governance Review Task Force had not been entirely completed. And so the Conference, in Resolution 3/08, while welcoming the first GRTF's report as a valuable contribution to the continuing debate on the future governance of WOSM and expressing its appreciation to the task force for their considerable efforts to conduct the review and produce its report, also asked the World Committee to establish a new task force, to work during the triennium now coming to a close, building on the work which had already been accomplished, and to report in time for any new proposals to amend the WOSM Constitution further to be considered here in Brazil.

The second Governance Review Task Force – GRTF2 to some of us – began its work following the Korea Conference. Its Terms of Reference specified that the task force should consider issues discussed at the 38th World Scout Conference in Korea and make relevant proposals, covering in particular:

- governance in a decentralised organization, where the ability to make strategy globally is balanced against the governance implications of delivery in the Regions
- committee structures and transparency of decision-making
- communications in the context of governance
- WOSM membership, particularly voting rights and the role of Accredited National Scout Organizations.

GRTF2 reported to the World Scout Committee in March 2010. The report, which was based on extensive consultations with NSOs, contained recommendations on all the areas I have just mentioned. Some of those fall within the authority of the World Scout Committee to implement, while others require further amendment to the WOSM Constitution, and this Conference will consider these at the plenary session on Thursday morning.

Outcomes

It is not my intention here to go into any detail of the proposals arising from the Governance review, or which are before this Conference. You have all had the opportunity to read the reports and recommendations which the two task forces produced, and to consider the proposals which are contained in the Conference Documents for this Conference.

I believe this period of review of our governance has been an extremely important one. It is a long time since we have undertaken such an in-depth study of how WOSM is governed. Indeed, some of the proposals which have been made touch for the first time on aspects of our governance that have been in place since WOSM as we know it today was established as a result of the Laszlo Nagy report of the late 1960s. Some of the proposals coming out of the governance review have been quite radical. Some were not accepted at the last World Scout Conference, perhaps because they were "ahead of their time". Some of the proposals being considered by this Conference may also not be accepted. But I am absolutely convinced that the review was needed, has been worthwhile and has produced excellent proposals for our consideration.

Much progress has also been made in the operational consequences of the review as can be seen from the Secretary General's report, but much also remains to be done in that area.

Thanks and appreciation

I want to take this opportunity to thank, most sincerely, the members of the two Governance Review Task Forces, both of which were very ably chaired by David Bull, a member of The Scout Association of the United Kingdom. The latest GRTF2, which has been working during this triennium, was also composed of Daniella Doueiry from Lebanon, Vukile Mehana from South Africa, Milena Pecarski, one of our Youth Advisors from Serbia, Tan Cheng Kiong from Singapore and Robert Wagner from Guatemala. Thank you, all of you, for your excellent work for WOSM!

Let's move on...

All good things must come to an end. And I also believe that the time spent on reviewing our governance of WOSM has also come to an end. We do not need a third Governance Review Task Force! It is time now to move on, to work at making whatever kinds of governance structures and methods we have operate effectively, always aimed at providing better support to our NSOs. If, at the end of this Conference, there are still one or two "loose ends" related to some governance issue or other that need to be tied up, I'm sure the World Scout Committee can make sure that happens, but without extending this period of in-depth review into a new triennium. Let's move on - and govern well!

Discussion groups - and questions

You will have the opportunity tomorrow afternoon, when we meet outdoors in workshops, to consider in depth the governance proposals which are before this Conference, before we make final decisions on Thursday on the WOSM Constitution and operationally through Conference Resolutions to be considered on Friday.

What I would urge you to do is to consider carefully the operational implications of the proposed changes to the WOSM Constitution. These are not necessarily obvious, so let me offer you just a couple of examples:

1. If the proposal to elect young members of the World Scout Committee under the age of 30 is accepted, we will need to consider whether there is a need in the future to have Youth Advisors to the WSC as we currently have them. The role of the Youth Forum in electing these Youth Advisors will also need to be reviewed.
2. If the proposal to introduce Accredited Scout Organizations is accepted in the form in which it has been proposed, members of ASOs will be entitled to stand for election to the World Scout Committee if they are nominated by an NSO.
3. If the changes that are proposed to the relationship between the World Scout Committee and the Regional Scout Committees are adopted, there will be implications there also affecting how the Regions operate, including the timing of elections to Regional Committees.

These are only some examples. Whatever our decisions there will be much to do to ensure their effective implementation by all of us.

In the meantime, Mr. Chairman, if there are any questions from the floor, I'm sure I, or the Secretary General or some other members of the World Scout Committee will do our best to answer them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.