



FMJD CHECKERS SECTION



To: Harry Otten,
FMJD President.

15th April 2012

Dear Harry,

Thank you for your recent and interesting correspondence regarding the proposed new FMJD Statutes received on 15th Feb 2012. Within that document you proposed a scheme that included the receipt of general comments and specific requests for additions of amendments to this document and this will be the subject of my current communication. I also note your recognition that the “*drafting, discussion, and approval of the new Statutes and Bye-laws needs to be a careful process*”, a statement with which I agree. First I will make some general comments:

Perhaps we should revisit the origins of the current situation. I quote from my previous letter to the FMJD dated 24th October 2011 where I noted...

“While I acknowledge that the FMJD was originally a 10x10 organisation, this fact changed when then FMJD President Walter Van Beek proposed a tripartite approach to strengthen the family of draughts which resulted in a reconfiguration of the FMJD into three divisions - a draughts 64 section, checkers section, and draughts 100 section. The predominant belief and motivation was that by 10x10, draughts 64, and checkers working together under the one umbrella of the FMJD they could collectively achieve that they all failed to do singularly.... Thus the new strength of draughts would be in its unity, and the FMJD undertook to promote all three variants of the game. These were the ideals and promises that the 64 square variants bought into. As a result of this combined approach the game of draughts, through the structure of the FMJD (3 sections), achieved its goal of being accepted by the IMSA in 2005 and thus became recognised as a “Mind Sport”. “

Since that time, with the increased status, publicity, a change of leadership, and potential financial benefits (sponsorship) becoming a possibility, the nature of the relationships between the three sections have come under greater scrutiny. The discussions regarding who done what, who paid for what, and who is entitled to what, has unfortunately caused some erosion of these relationships during the past year to a point where I believe the 100 square variant is now seeking something of a reversal of the previous agreement. This new concept, being sold as creating “more independence”, has both immediate and long term implications for all divisions, and I’m not convinced that this new initiative will improve things and if anything, there is the potential for damage to the family that is “draughts”.

The previous structure allowed the variants that I refer to as 100, draughts 64, and checkers (all of whom simply call themselves “Draughts”) to work together on a level that I will refer to as “an equality of status”, with mutual respect for the workings of each other. It was always envisaged that they would work independent of each other, while continuing to work together for common agreed objectives. In this sense the current structure of the FMJD still holds this potential of good communication and independence under the umbrella name of FMJD. The new proposed structure changes this, and the

effects of these changes (some quite radical) have the potential to damage these relationships and this should not be underestimated. I will briefly outline the core proposed changes here:

- (a) A change of name from the FMJD to the “World Draughts Federation FMJD”,
- (b) The “World Draughts Federation FMJD” will now be for the 100 square variation only.
- (c) That checkers and draughts 64 can apply annually to become “Associate Members”
- (d) The draughts 64/checkers variants can only participate in events that allows multiple variants of draughts.

In the first instance it is my impression that the “new FMJD” wishes to continue to be viewed as the world body for the game of draughts, while in reality it will be “primarily” for 100 squares only. Thus the name does not reflect the reality of the proposed situation. The proposal that the 64 square variants can “apply” to become associate members is considerably divisive. To begin with, it eliminates any sense of equality, i.e. that one organisation should have to apply to become associated with another. Again, within these new proposals there is no guarantee that such an application would be successful which is quite insulting to the 64 variants.

Likewise, the current structure of the three variants working together as a body that has direct communication with IMSA and SportAccord (facilitated through the attendance of the 64 variants at FMJD GA meetings) and their ability to make proposals and vote on issues relevant to the family of Draughts is to be withdrawn. The new structure proposes to remove the 64 square variants from such communication. They will only be allowed to make a short oral presentation. Furthermore, there is the issue that suggests that the 64 variants can only participate in events that allows multiple variants of draughts – who decides what these events are? Is it the 100 square variant through their exclusive communication with IMSA?

Personally I believe that these new proposed statutes are taking a lot for granted. It is assumed that the 64 square variants will be happy to go along with these proposed changes that will treat them as a second class variant. There are some things that should be pointed out here. There are many countries around the world who promote more than one variant of the game. Countries like Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Mongolia, Turkmenistan Italy, and Brazil to name a few of them, promote different variants and this multiple promotion has been good for the benefit of the family of draughts. This is how the 100 square variant entered some of these countries. These new proposed Statutes will create division and disharmony, even discrimination, as they will treat such draughts organisations / countries differently depending on the variant that is the most popular in that area. It could potentially facilitate the 100 square variant to “cherry pick” the organisation they want representing a particular country where different organisations promote different variants within the one country – discrimination at a most basic level. This must never be allowed to happen. Is it not in the best interests of the game that we encourage such multiple organisation and participation in events where everyone will benefit? Former FMJD President Pieter Hilderling wrote to you on 25th October 2011 regarding this issue where he clearly stated *“I think that joint forces to get more member countries should be the goal and if this member country is based on 100-64 or checkers is a minor issue, in fact not the most important thing.”*

The game played on 64 squares have a long and honourable tradition. Most draughts being played around the world are being played on 64 squares. They are a worldwide group, with world champions dating from the 1840’s – 50 years before Chess or 100 squares. Here I might point out that the FMJD’s attempt at defining the game of draughts as *“an elimination game where a player tries to capture all the pieces of their opponent on a board of 100 squares ...”* (<http://www.imsaworld.com/>) is an insult to the 64 square variants and is only going to create more disharmony and separation. Do you believe the 64 square variants will entrust themselves to the “new FMJD” where it appears there is an attempt by the 100 square variation to write them out of history!?

All of these things have implications. Take for example the new proposed name – *“World Draughts Federation FMJD”*. As the current “Sections” will be independent then they would no-longer be referring to themselves as a “section”. The current names of “Draughts 64” and “Checkers” were agreed names within this FMJD tripartite approach so as to distinguish them from each other. That will no-longer be the case if these new Statutes are accepted. What you call “Checkers” is a fully constituted World draughts organisation - being the world governing body for this variant for many

years. Likewise the Russian game is likely to revert to becoming the World Draughts Federation for their variant, just as the Brazilian game will do also. Anyone looking for information about the World governing body of draughts will quickly become confused and the lack of harmony will quickly become apparent. Likewise if the 64 variants are cut out of the direct communications with the IMSA, etc, then they will retain the right to instigate their own communications and arrange their own meetings with these organisations (IMSA, SportAccord, Olympic movement). None of this will look good to our Sports partners of Bridge, Chess, etc, as they will quickly realise the smallest group within Mind Sports are at odds within themselves, but what choice would the 64 square variants have that would maintain and promote their interests within these organisations?

There are also questions as to why the 64 square variants should become “Associate Members” of the new FMJD while paying what is effectively an “affiliation fee” per country rather than per organisation. If you wish to put more distance between organisations and financial crossover why do you propose individual countries affiliating? Surely countries will affiliate to their organisation (Checkers, Russian, etc), and the organisations will commit to work together. The more money that draughts on 64 squares will be asked to pay on an ongoing basis, the more concessions they will seek – delegates, votes, etc. Furthermore, why should they have to pay an administration fee of €500 to the FMJD for collecting entry fees at major Mind Sports events when they are in themselves an independent, properly constituted, and registered sports body? There is much to be discussed and agreed here.

Harry, you wrote that the development of the new Statutes “*is a process that needs careful consideration and decision-making*”. I’m not sure that this has been accomplished yet as there are many potential serious problems on the horizon that have not been carefully thought through or openly discussed. Neither am I sure that the potential development of two World Draughts Federations, one for 100 and the other for combined 64, would be in the game’s long term interests, but it may eventually have to come to this.

If it is the FMJD’s wish to remain as one family, with the variants remaining more independent / self sufficient, and with clearly defined financial crossovers, then I do not believe the changes required needs to be this dramatic or divisive as proposed within the new FMJD Statutes. I note these proposed statutes suggest that Associate “countries” could affiliate (let’s call it what it is) for a reduced fee, but they cannot send a delegate, make proposals, or vote on anything. If the intention is to work together, yet remain independent, I cannot see where this communication interface exists or where the variants demonstrate respect for each other? There are many models of similar working relationships, e.g. FIDE who have (a) full members, (b) affiliate members, and (c) associate members, with clearly defined working relationships. I’d query your model and ask how this would form the basis of a good working relationship. With this in mind I will suggest something different for your consideration as an alternative to both your proposed model, and that of FIDE.

Likewise, I note your attempt to equate the term “*international draughts*” with “*draughts played on 100 square*” in the new proposed Statutes. I consider this to be both ridiculous and meaningless within the context of this document. The term “international draughts” has been used within the family of draughts for centuries. This phrase has been associated with many checker events - the England Vs Scotland match at Glasgow in 1884 or the Great Britain Vs USA match of 1905. Within the literature we need look no further than the “*International Draughts*” magazine, published by J. A. Kear of Bristol, England during the 1880’s and early 1890’s. This publication was exclusively for what you like to call “checkers”. If you talk of “international draughts” then you refer to all variants of draughts. That is an undisputable fact. If you are attempting to refer to draughts played on 100 squares, then you should clearly state this “*draughts played on 100 square*” to quantify what you are trying to say and to avoid ambiguity.

The new Statutes should define the relationships, communication pathways, benefits, and obligations clearly. I’m not sure that this has been achieved yet, but this is very much possible within the next 8 weeks (prior to 19th June) if the will is there to do it. I’m certainly committed to it. The emphasis should remain focused on an overall format that will address the needs of the variants to ensure it endures. A document that is divisive will remain so, even if passed by a majority at the special General

Assembly, and is unlikely to achieve adherence. Agreeing something in principle is one thing, but agreeing on the specific detail is always more difficult.

With this in mind I would suggest the following proposed changes to new Statutes as a potential improvement:

Art. 1.1.

The World Draughts Federation FMJD, originally Federation Mondiale du Jeu de Dames, is a non-profit association, composed of autonomous and independent national draughts federations for international draughts (draughts played on 100 squares)

Should be changed to:

The World Draughts Federation FMJD, originally Federation Mondiale du Jeu de Dames, is a non-profit association, composed of autonomous and independent national draughts federations for draughts played on boards of 64 and 100 squares

Otherwise, I'd suggest *The World Draughts Federation FMJD 100*" should be the correct name to accurately reflect what it is. There's little point in saying its one thing, and pretending it's another.

Art. 1.2.

The objectives of FMJD are

1. To promote and develop international draughts at all levels, as a means to contribute to the positive development of society

Should be changed to:

1. To promote and develop the game of draughts at all levels, as a means to contribute to the positive development of society

Art. 5.

The Members of FMJD are the countries represented by the:

- a) The Full Members*
- b) The Associate Members in so far they are no Full Member.*

Whose admission has been approved by the General Assembly

Changes are required here to. For a start you mention "provisional members" (7.3) but fail to mention them here. Likewise if Checkers and Russian 64 are to be associated with the new FMJD then it's the organization (i.e. Checkers, Draughts 64) who would become ASSOCIATE ORGANISATIONS and not individual countries affiliating, thus creating the separation and independence you talk about. Thus Article 5 would read:

The Members of FMJD are the countries represented by:

- a) The Full Members*
- b) The Provisional Members in so far they are not a Member whose admission has been provisionally approved by the General Assembly.*
- c) The Associated Organisations.*

Article 6.2 - Should read thus ..

Associate Organisations are independent draughts bodies representing other variants of draughts such as, but not limited to:

- *Russian and / or Brazilian draughts*
- *Checkers*
- *Turkish draughts*

Or other variants with whom the FMJD are committed to working in partnership with towards a better shared future.

Associate Organisation's are independent having their own council, finances, general assembly and elections.

Article 9. Should read thus:

9.1 and, if full members (or associate organisations), to exercise their right

Article 17. Should read thus....

17.1 The General Assembly is the meeting attended by the Members of FMJD, and a representative from each of the associated organisations. It is the supreme organ of FMJD.

Article 19. Should read thus ...

19.3 Each Associate Organisation shall be entitled to send a delegate.

Article 21. Should read thus ..

21.3 A delegate representing each of the Associated Organisations who has satisfied all its financial obligations towards FMJD at the time of the meeting is entitled to one vote.

Article 30.

COUNCIL

Composition and election

30.1 (6) A representative from the Associated Organisations who will oversee and work towards improving the relationships between the associated Organisations and the FMJD.

Article 36.

36.1

- *Associate organizations: 200% of a membership subscription.*

I look forward to hearing from you on this.

Yours Sincerely:

Hugh Devlin.
President Checkers Section.