World Sailing

sport / nature / technology

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Review of Plenary Session 2: Role of GA/Council/Board/Committees

This note summarises the discussions held during Plenary Session 2 on the roles and responsibilities of the General Assembly, Council, the Board and Committees.

Summary of Main Issues Raised

1. Should the role of the General Assembly be more streamlined and, in particular, focus on electing and recalling members of the Board and MNA representatives on Council, amending the Constitution, and receiving financial information? The structure should ensure that there is no duplication between the role of the General Assembly and the role of Council. There was overwhelming consensus that a Council was necessary.

2. There was useful discussion across a number of speakers between what is policy and how should it be implemented, what should be in the Regulations, and the crossover of any 'grey areas'. Many speakers liked the concept of Council focussing more on policy and less on technical wording of regulations (which should support and be consistent with decided policy), although some felt it was inappropriate to transfer responsibility for regulations to the Board. One delegate felt that the workload expected of the Board was already too much and felt that placing more decisions through the Board would be a backwards step.

3. The work of Council should be driven by its role in approving, and then monitoring the implementation of World Sailing's strategy and policy. The agenda of Council should not be driven by submissions received on disparate topics.

4. What should be the composition of Council – should it be composed of more than just MNA representatives? Does it currently represent the stakeholders of World sailing i.e. should it be a forum representing MNAs as a whole or representing wider stakeholders? Where should bodies such as Classes be appropriately represented, and would specialist groups such as Oceanic & Offshore, Para Sailing etc. be represented? A number of speakers felt that Classes in particular should be given a much stronger and more prominent position in the structure – potentially at the General Assembly as well as Council. Others felt that athletes should be given more positions on Council.

5. Some speakers preferred allowing Committee Chairs sitting on Council (with or without a vote) to assist and contribute more effectively to debate and decisions. Another suggested that Board members sitting on Council should not be able to vote and this would increase the power and responsibility of other Council members.

6. Decision-makers should be given enough time and the right information to consider proposals to it – at present recommendations not based on submission can include complicated matters at short notice, and one speaker felt that sometimes the right information was not available for decision-makers to consider.

7. Some participants said the Board's role should be to execute and implement the strategy and policies (and it should have the power to do this). Some questioned whether it was appropriate to shift power and responsibilities away from Council – and indeed whether there should be any change at all? One speaker queried what would be the link between the two bodies and another asked about the appropriate divide between 'sport' decisions and 'business' decisions and ensuring decisions taken in both go hand-in-hand.

8. The role and responsibilities of the Board should be a non-executive one which support a staff-led, volunteer-enabled organisation. Should the Executive Office be able to develop and produce more proposals than at present for consideration? Some delegates felt there should be responsibility transferred away from the Board and staff to Council because it was the only way MNAs can be effectively represented. Others felt that the move towards electronic meetings and decision-making should be factored into the proposals to allow more regular participation by MNAs for whom travel costs can be a barrier.

9. Views were expressed that the actual decisions being proposed to be made by Council may be going further than the stated overall role and responsibilities which are being proposed. It was also noted that bodies which report to the Board should also be able make to recommendations to Council about policy. Reporting lines in the diagrams should not be regarded as exclusive.

10. Questions were asked about what mechanisms will be in place to ensure the views of the minority are properly represented and put forward before a majority decision becomes binding.

11. Other suggestions put forward by various speakers were:

    a. There should be a committee dedicated to issues of equality and diversity.

    b. There should be a separate commission to determine conflicts of interest rather than leaving the question to the chair of a meeting or the meeting itself.

    c. Working Groups and Ad Hoc Committees should be able to have members not already sitting on existing Committees.

    d. The structure of the Rules Committee, Racing Rules and Equipment Rules Committees should be reconsidered

e. The location of meetings should be decided solely by the Board.

f. Policies should be recorded properly and publicly available *[Note: this is already a Regulation [Regulation 14].*

g. Following one speaker's questioning of the domicile of the Federation being in the Isle of Man, it was asked whether the GSC was going to respond?

Any members who wish to provide additional feedback, or respond to the issues noted above, are welcome to email governance@sailing.org to provide them direct the Governance Sub-committee. The GSC is, of course, available for any further discussion or debate at the convenience of Stakeholders follow up conversations can be organised either individually or in a group.