

World Sailing Classes Committee 2025 Annual Report to Council

As I complete my fifth year as Chair of the World Sailing Classes Committee, I find myself reflecting not only on what we have achieved, but also on where the sport of sailing finds itself today. The WSCC remains, as ever, the voice of more than 100 international classes: a wonderfully diverse fleet representing every corner of our sport, from youth dinghies and foiling cats to more traditional keelboats and the Olympic elite. Together they form the living DNA of sailing.

Over these past five years, the Committee has steadily evolved. We've moved from single annual gatherings to a rhythm of multiple meetings throughout the year, a small but meaningful step toward greater engagement. The online format has opened the door for more classes to participate, though we continue to seek the right balance between efficiency, inclusivity, and how to attract classes to actively participate in our working groups. I am convinced that the WSCC's strength lies not in the number of proposals we process, but in the quality of the conversations we foster between classes, events, and World Sailing itself.

There are, of course, a few recurring headwinds. Insurance, specifically third-party liability, remains a particularly persistent one. The issue continues to create real risks for some classes, not only at the elite level but throughout the sport. We've worked closely with the Office to find a global approach, but it is clear that piecemeal, short-term solutions will not carry us very far.

Equally, we are looking at more informal and flexible ways to convene class meetings and strengthen continuity of representation. A proposal is under discussion in the WSCC to allow longer-standing class representatives on the WSCC and to address the ever-present quorum issue—which currently feels more like an anchor than a rudder. Our hope is that the rules of procedure serve to *facilitate* progress rather than to *frustrate* it.

It would be remiss not to mention the broader state of the sport. World Sailing, in its structure and focus, still leans heavily toward the Olympic end of the spectrum. Yet the Olympic classes are the tip of the iceberg—below the waterline lie the hundreds of international and national classes that feed the sport, nurture talent, and sustain participation. We would do well to rebalance our focus: building sailing as an accessible, lifelong sport in all countries, not just as a high-performance showcase every four years. Then again, when we *do* showcase our sport at the Olympic level, let it be in formats that viewers understand and are drawn to. Otherwise, I fear our Olympic days may be numbered.

We must also look critically, but constructively, at a few barriers embedded in our policies and governance that hinder class growth. To name a few:

- The current requirement for full International Jury panels at all World Championships may be excessive. A “light” IJ panel system could maintain integrity and fairness without imposing the full cost burden on sailors. This also touches on the fact that our classes are not all equal in resources or scale.
- The International Class criteria, well-intentioned though they are, sometimes feel more like relics of bureaucracy than instruments of progress. Especially when those criteria occasionally flex to accommodate the shifting priorities of each Olympic cycle. Perhaps it's time to accept that the vitality of sailing depends less on the boats themselves and more on how we structure, score, and celebrate their racing—and the sailors helping them.

You may notice that these issues have found their way into our working groups for further discussion and practical follow-up.

Despite all this, or perhaps because of it, I remain optimistic. The classes continue to show resilience, ingenuity, and a love of sailing that transcends formats and politics. That spirit has sustained me through these five years as Chair, and I remain grateful to my WSCC executive with Vice Chair and Cross Representatives, the Office—Pilar López, Katrina Ham, Jaime Navarro, Nelia Smith, and David Graham, among many others—for their constant support, even when our discussions may have occasionally tested the bandwidth of diplomacy.

In closing, I believe our collective challenge is to make World Sailing not just an organization that governs sailing, but one that *grows* sailing—for everyone. To that effect I have also submitted a proposal to further grow the participation options for women in our wonderful sport.

The WSCC stands ready, as always, to play its part in that journey.

Jan Martin Wilschut
World Sailing Classes Committee Chair
Council Member