

# Report of the Secretary General

June 17, 2023

Dear Colleagues,

Once again, welcome to the 71st FIL Congress in Bucharest, Romania and thanks to the Romanian Federation for hosting this Congress and offering a warm and collegial setting for our meetings.

As we look back on the 2022-23 season, it was a productive one. In my reports over the last two years, I expressed that the FIL had experienced perhaps its most challenging years in its history due to Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine. I am happy to report this year that this past season was one of more promise and optimism as the impact of Covid-19 finally abated and it felt like a big weight had been lifted off our shoulders, **but we still pray for peace in Ukraine**. As the President just mentioned in his report, the prolonged war in Ukraine has created immense suffering for the people in Ukraine and a strain on the Olympic sports family.

I am pleased to report that under the leadership of President Fogelis, the FIL continues to implement our strategy plan-- "**Slide 2026**". You will hear more about our progress later today from various working groups but, I want to highlight some of the important initiatives that are now underway as we turn our sights to the 2026 Olympic Winter Games in Milano-Cortina:

## **Gender Equality**

- For the first time in our history, Women competed in Doubles Luge at Senior World Cup races, and the World Championships this past season as the FIL moves toward full **gender equality**.
- This coming season, Women's Doubles Luge will be added as the final leg of the popular Team Relay event for all World Cups and the World Championships.
- Women's Doubles Luge will make its debut at the **Olympic Winter Games in February of 2026** and including the Team Relay, will be full medal events for the Women.

- It is also noteworthy that the Doubles Women are successfully racing on standardized doubles sleds-- although we know the quality and cost of these sleds must be improved.

### **Implement Standardized Sleds**

- Speaking of standardized sleds, as per Slide 2026, plans to implement standardized sleds at all levels are also underway, with a goal to be ready for the 2026-27 racing season.

### **Create a New Sport Integrity Unit**

Another new addition to the FIL Organization and a component of the IOC 2020+5 plan and included in the 2023-24 budget; are the necessary funds to create a Sport Integrity Unit within the FIL. This new Unit will be headed by former luge athlete, President Luge Canada, and Calgary Police officer-Steve Harris. Steve is uniquely qualified to become the new full-time Sport Integrity Officer. The unit will be comprehensive and include:

- Athlete Safeguarding Policies and Protocols
- Injury Prevention and Concussion Protocols
- Anti-Doping, ITA and WADA Protocols and Coordination
- Competition Manipulation & Gambling in Luge sport Prevention
- Gender Equality Implementation Oversight
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policies
- To assist Steve in implementing the big task will be the establishment of an FIL Sport Integrity Working Group to be Chaired by former athlete and President of the Australian Luge Federation, Hannah Campbell-Pegg, with the intent of making this working group a permanent Commission at next year's Congress.

Steve and Hannah will be giving you an overview of this new Integrity Unit later today.

## **Enhanced TV and Media for the FIL**

This past season, the FIL took control over the live streaming for all senior world cup races as well as created a new ***behind the scenes*** media platform-the **FIL Studio**. Because of these efforts, the FIL substantially increased its presence on the internet. In fact, the FIL was ***first*** this past season in percentage of viewer growth on **YouTube** and **Facebook** of all Summer and Winter International Federations as ranked by **RedTorch**. Plans are already underway for new and improved programming for next year.

In April of this year the FIL convened a **TV/Media Summit** meeting of experts in Munich to review ways to contain costs for TV production, as we know this is a big financial hurdle for those national federations and track owners holding world cups races. In addition, the experts attending the summit meeting are exploring ways to make our sport more appealing and interesting to our viewers. Next year, the FIL Studio and Live Streaming will run on the same YouTube Channel so you will not have to toggle back and forth. The FIL will also expand its reach on social media and the internet.

***[I would now like to show a short video from the FIL Studio]***

## **Natural Track and Public Sledding**

As with artificial track luge, the FIL would like to make natural track luge more appealing and attractive to our viewers. Also, we must reach out to the public to enhance basic sled racing accessible to everyone like is already the case in Austria, the Alpine Luge program in Sweden and the Luge Challenge program in the US.

## **FIL Development Program**

As for the development of our sport, I wanted to thank the IOC Solidarity Department for the financial support and close cooperation for the Luge School in Sigulda and the follow-on support for pre-YOG training in PyeongChang this past season. These programs help to increase the strength and sustainability of our developing National Federations and their athletes.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for allowing me the honor to serve you and the FIL as your General Secretary. We have faced the challenges of the past several years **together** and we must work **together** to face the challenges as well as take advantage of the opportunities in our future.

I wanted also to thank President Einars Fogelis for his leadership this past year and his focus on implementing Slide 2026. Thanks also to the FIL Executive Board, Executive Director Christoph Schweiger, and our entire FIL team for the hard work and dedication to the FIL. I would also like to express our appreciation for the unwavering support from the IOC, as well as our sponsors, suppliers, TV partners, and key stakeholders.

Lastly, thanks to Philipp Trattner for serving as the VP for Finance this past year. Although your term of service did not last as long as we had all hoped, we certainly understand and respect your decision and wish you continued success into the future.

Respectfully submitted, Dwight Bell, *FIL Secretary General*