

ANNEX 14

INTERNATIONAL PARACHUTING COMMISSION TECHNICAL AND SAFETY COMMITTEE Chairman's Report IPC Plenary Meeting, Lausanne, Switzerland, 23-27 January 2002

In 2001, the Technical and Safety Sub-Committee has made an effort to refocus its role within the IPC and within the context of the international skydiving scene. Whilst the T&S Committee for many years has produced much useful information, particularly about accidents and use of Automatic Activation Devices in member countries, it was felt by the present sub-committee members that skydiving had grown to such a level of complexity over the past few years, that many developments, events and trends in various countries, that were of interest to others, were not readily made known internationally. Of course, much of the onus of the dissemination of information remains with the international parachuting press, but it was recognized that the media were often operating in a limited, regional, and possibly tendentious context. Other means of identifying and disseminating facts, incidents, practices and standards that apply in various countries are, therefore, required. Your sub-committee has addressed this problem in various ways: first, an e-mail address list of the responsible technical specialists in various member countries of the IPC has been constructed and is being continually updated, and second, a questionnaire has been designed, to gain an insight into some of the experiences and practices in one nation that may be of great interest to practitioners in others. In a quest to understand issues and problems, it is important to have access to base information. In this regard, we are thinking especially about various international standards of safety, tandem jumping practices, "migration of equipment", popularity of various disciplines in diverse countries, and much more. We urge all technical representatives that are present here in Lausanne, to support this project by completing the "Pilot Questionnaire" that we have distributed at this meeting. Based on the findings of this limited survey, a more comprehensive questionnaire will be designed and distributed soon, to address some of the other major questions that currently prevail, or may appear, in our sport.

By no means does your T&S Sub Committee envisage the creation of an international "information clearing house". At this stage at least, such a lofty goal appears to be unattainable under the present constraints of finance and personnel. However, within limits, some urgent information has already been sent out by this Committee to the parachuting press and technical directors of various nations. For example, the T&S Sub-committee was able to alert the skydiving community of a tandem harness failure that occurred recently and that was, fortunately, not fatal. E-mail does, of course, make dissemination of information possible at the click of the mouse, and we hope that member nations will make use of this tool and inform the T&S Sub-Committee of any important discoveries, experiences, incidents and accidents that merit dissemination. Please inform us. We'll take it from there.

The T&S Sub-Committee still believes that the Annual Safety Survey is a most valuable endeavour, and the research this year was once again spearheaded by Liam McNulty of Ireland. Unfortunately, the number of nations NOT completing the questionnaire still outweighs those that do. Nevertheless, we were able to discern certain trends, and these will be presented at this meeting. Again, we urge you to complete the annual IPC Safety Survey, if possible, right here at this meeting. It helps to pinpoint problem areas and facilitates the formulation of any remedial intervention.

Another project, commenced by the T&S Sub-Committee four years ago, is the creation of a recognized system of International Parachutist Certificates. Commonly known as "licences" or "International Certificates of Proficiency", you will remember that our survey in 1999 had indicated that a wide variety of standards and qualifications were in use in different member nations, so that it became virtually meaningless, if not impossible, to attempt to discern levels of competence of

traveling jumpers with any confidence. At the last IPC Meeting in San Diego in 2001, the national delegates overwhelmingly approved the adoption of a set of international standards for FAI "International Parachutist Certificates" that are recommended to be met, if not exceeded, by member nations. I am pleased to report that several nations have already followed the recommendations presented and approved in the San Diego meeting, and amended their existing standards for FAI International Parachutist Certificates. Nations that now comply with, or exceed, FAI Standards for International Parachutist Certificates include, inter alia, Netherlands, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Kenya. I am sure that more will follow. Meanwhile, your T&S Sub-Committee has designed a standard booklet of the International Parachutist Certificate, in all four official FAI languages (English, French, Russian and Spanish). This standard document is available from FAI headquarters right here in Lausanne, and can then be issued by the individual parachuting associations of each country.

Another issue addressed by your T&S Sub-Committee, at a meeting in October 2001 at Mombasa, Kenya, was 'international parachutist insurance'. Questions were raised, such as the possibility of standardizing the level of coverage of traveling skydivers, the possible role of the IPC in this, co-operation between national associations in obtaining an international coverage on the London market, etc. The issue was found to be fraught with hidden complexities, and it was concluded that, given the limited manpower and financial resources of the IPC and FAI, it was perhaps premature to standardize international insurance requirements and benefits.

The T&S Sub-Committee has, in 2001, received several requests from "developing parachuting nations" to offer advice and assistance on technical matters. These were dealt with on an ad hoc basis. Members are reminded to make use of this facility and to inform their associations that this advisory service is available to all.

Delegates will agree that progress on the international skydiving scene is, by necessity, slower than on a national or regional level. Compromises often have to be made, and engrained value systems changed in relation to new insights and developments. A common denominator is not always easy to discern. Yet, in the IPC we are all guided by one common goal of paramount importance: to enhance safety in our sport. Your T&S Sub-Committee will continue to strive towards this. Your help is needed. Please keep us informed, and help us help you.

Harro V. Trempenau
Chairman
IPC Technical and Safety Sub-Committee