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World Organization of the Scout Movement  
Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout  
Всемирная Организация Скаутского Движения  
Organización Mundial del Movimiento Scout  
المنظمة العالمية للحركة الكشفية

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To: International Commissioners

7 April 2008

**Response to 'Open Letter to Members of the World Scout Committee'**

Dear Colleagues,

In October 2007, several National Scout Organizations (NSOs) signed an 'Open Letter to Members of the World Scout Committee' (WSC), in which they raised a number of issues and concerns about transparency within WOSM, its decision-making processes, and the support it provides to NSOs.

The WSC apologises sincerely for the inordinate delay in replying directly to the Open Letter. The WSC acknowledges that it has not always met an acceptable standard of communications with NSOs and with the Regions. The WSC intends to make sure this will not happen again.

The matters raised in the Open Letter have not been ignored and the WSC now takes this opportunity to offer a response to them. The WSC reaffirms its commitment to work with all NSOs and to respond in the future in a timely manner to any concerns, questions or constructive criticisms that may be raised.

The Open Letter identified a number of specific issues related to overall governance as well as management that were of concern to the NSOs which signed it. These included *inter alia* a perceived trend towards centralisation within WOSM and especially the World Scout Bureau (WSB), lack of support to NSOs, the new branding strategy, supervision of World Scout Events, evaluation of the performance of the WSC and WSB, lack of response to membership and registration fee concerns, financial controls, and decision-making processes.

The WSC has considered all of these criticisms carefully and acknowledges that many of them are valid and justified. The WSC believes that better communication and consultation with NSOs, Regions and partners might have helped to keep these stakeholders better informed of work that was underway or the reasons for certain proposals that were being considered, but accepts that this, unfortunately, did not take place effectively. Since the Open Letter was received, a number of actions have been taken to provide such information to NSOs; to mention just one example, see Circular No. 40/2007, which explains in detail the reasons which led to the delay in publishing the accounts for the 2006 fiscal year.

The WSC has also considered carefully the specific actions proposed in the Open Letter to improve the situation and restore confidence. In relation to these, the WSC would like to state that:

- a) World Scout Foundation (WSF): The WSC agrees that it is important to improve and strengthen the relationship with the WSF as it recognises the valuable support provided over the years. Much progress has already been achieved and this has been acknowledged by the WSF Board which met on 4 April 2008 in Korea.
- b) Identified shortcomings: The WSC fully agrees that it must address the shortcomings identified in its evaluations and steps in this direction will be taken.
- c) Picarquin: The suggestions made in the Open Letter have been overtaken by the recent decision of the WSC to withdraw from the project, a decision which was communicated to all NSOs.
- d) Financial system: The current financial systems and controls are found to be satisfactory to the external auditors Ernst and Young, the Budget Committee and the Audit Committee, so the WSC considers that there is no further action to be taken.
- e) Transparency of decision-making: The WSC is continually working to improve transparency in its decision-making processes and it welcomes constructive feedback in this area.
- f) Consultation on major capital proposals: The WSC agrees on the need to consult with NSOs on major capital and human resource proposals. Such consultation will be implemented whenever necessary.

- g) Location of the World Headquarters: There was a World Scout Conference Resolution in 2005 which proposed that the WSB Central Office move from Geneva. This Conference Resolution was defeated, so the WSB Central Office will remain in Geneva for the time being. (We are aware that another resolution on this subject is being proposed by some NSOs to the Korea Conference.)
- h) Working methods at the World Scout Conference: Members of the WSC and WSB are working diligently on the preparations for the World Scout Conference, fully aware there is a need to focus on membership growth and development and on good governance. A number of proposed changes and innovations in the pattern of the Conference have been presented to all Regional Conferences as well as to various other audiences and have been well received. Members of the Organising Committee will be happy to work with individuals from NSOs as these plans are implemented.
- i) Support to NSOs: The WSC recognises the important role that the Regional Offices of the WSB play as the focus of support to NSOs. There is no wish to centralise controls, other than to see the WSB staff as one team working in various locations.

In addition to the above steps already taken since last October, the WSC is committed to making every effort to:

- pay closer attention to the needs of NSOs and trying harder to respond to these needs;
- recognise the legitimate requirements of partners and fostering closer mutual understanding with them;
- communicate more transparently and consult more systematically with stakeholders, particularly when important decisions are being made that affect them, and listen carefully to suggestions and feedback;
- avoid distractions and focus efforts and WOSM's limited human and financial resources on important initiatives, within the framework of the Strategy for Scouting, to help NSOs move forward in "creating a better world" for more young people.

Following the last World Scout Conference in Tunisia the WSC set out a roadmap to the next Conference in Korea. In relation to the preparations for the Conference, work is happening in four main areas:

1. The Governance Review Task Force (GRTF) has worked hard during the triennium and has produced their report to the WSC, which has been circulated to all NSOs. As you know, the WSC has put forward proposals to the Conference, based on the GRTF report and NSOs' reactions to it, and various NSOs have also proposed amendments to the WOSM Constitution dealing with the governance of the Movement, which will all be considered in Korea.
2. The Membership Development Task Force (MDTF) has been working hard on the task delegated to them. A detailed plan has been developed and is being implemented so that a tool, based on one produced earlier by the European Region, using a systematic approach and adapted for use by NSOs around the world, will be ready for the Conference in Korea.
3. The Registration Fee Task Force (RFTF) has also been working on revisions to the registration fee system and will bring proposals to the Korea Conference.
4. There has been a systematic follow up of the Conference Resolutions passed in Tunisia in 2005. The WSC has received regular reports of progress in these areas of work, which will be documented in Conference Documents to be circulated in advance of the Korea Conference.

Article XIII.5 of WOSM's Constitution states that one function of the WSC is to "prepare the agenda and the procedure of the meetings of the World Conference, giving consideration to suggestions from Member Organizations". World Scout Conferences always provide an opportunity to re-focus our efforts for the future. The WSC has prepared and circulated the draft agenda for the forthcoming Conference in Korea in July 2008, which tries to take into account the concerns and suggestions expressed in the Open Letter and conveyed to the WSC by other channels. This Conference will be an especially important one, as we consider far-reaching proposals for constitutional change and new directions, as we move into the second century of the Movement. The WSC is trying hard to ensure that the Conference, through a different style of programme and fresh ideas, will be a success.

The WSC recommit itself to supporting NSOs, in the time remaining prior to the World Scout Conference, during the Conference itself and thereafter. Further comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Yours in Scouting,

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Chairman, WSC

Luc Panissod  
Acting Secretary General, WOSM