

# AMERICAN PHILATELIC SOCIETY

100 Match Factory Place • Bellefonte, PA 16823-1367  
Phone: 814-933-3803 • Fax: 814-933-6128 • [www.stamps.org](http://www.stamps.org)



May 5, 2017

Tay Peng Hian, RDP, President  
Fédération Internationale de Philatélie  
3, Kian Teck Way, Singapore 628732

Dear Mr. Tay:

**PURPOSE.** I represent the 30,000 members of the American Philatelic Society (APS) and our Board of Directors. The purpose of this letter is to express our serious concerns about the operations and governance of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP). To remedy the problems identified, we are offering a set of proposals that we will be asking to have placed on the agenda at the next FIP Board meeting. This letter should not come as a surprise to you since for nearly two years the philatelic press in the United States has reported direct, explicit criticism of the FIP which I am sure you have read. Likewise, there has been growing condemnation of FIP in parts of the international exhibiting community.

**OPERATIONS.** Deficiencies in FIP's operations fall into the following areas: fairness and quality of philatelic judging, the selection of international jury members, the growing expense of international exhibiting, and fostering friendly relationships and cooperation among philatelists.

1. ***The Fairness and Quality of FIP Jury Members.*** Judging competitive exhibits is always controversial. However, in a recent series of FIP competitions, patently inferior exhibits have been selected as Grand Prix winners over clearly more significant and superior exhibits. Specific examples have been well described in the journal Linn's Stamp News and The Philatelic Exhibitor, journal of the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors. Awards that are widely believed by many top philatelists to be clearly undeserved have led to the widespread perception of either incompetent or corrupt judging. It is apparent that the numbers of candidates (more than the traditional maximum number of 3) are also being manipulated to support wins by the inferior exhibits; wins with small pluralities in the voting which the majority of the juries find disgusting. These manipulations through the gaming of the rules are not acceptable. When clearly none of the best exhibits win, serious collectors are dissuaded from further FIP competition. As a result, some in the United States have called for a boycott of all FIP competitions. To date, the APS has not supported such a boycott. However, fewer U.S. exhibitors will be willing to spend the time and money to compete in FIP shows when they have little confidence in the fairness and quality of the judging.

2. ***The Selection of FIP Jury Members.*** The FIP president and the exhibition coordinator appointed by him can heavily influence the selection of the jury. This consolidates power and influence in the FIP leadership rather than sharing it with the member nations. This also makes it easy for the FIP leadership to control the jury members and dictate results. It is our proposal that all FIP qualified judges should be eligible and chosen by the respective national federations by submission of a short list to the organizing committee. If, for reasons of jury balance, nominations from the short list cannot be accommodated, the organizing committee should refer back to the national federation for another candidate. It should not be the prerogative of the FIP president or coordinator to choose which jury members will represent national federations. This change would ensure that more judges would have an opportunity to gain FIP judging experience, not just those favored by the FIP leadership. Balance is also an issue. For example, why should a country that provides two exhibits have the same number of judging assignments as a country that provides 25?

3. ***The Growing Expense of FIP Exhibiting.*** The cost of exhibiting: frames, international travel, accommodations, insurance, and meals, continues to grow. This ever-increasing expense is also contributing to the growing difficulty of finding exhibitors who are interested in participating in FIP competitions. However, the FIP treasury currently has a balance of approximately 2.5 million CHF (Swiss Francs), the equivalent of \$2.48 million USD (U.S. Dollars). We propose that some of this money should be used to underwrite the expense of FIP competition for the host show committee as well as frame fees. A positive start would be for the FIP to pay the frame fees for first-time exhibitors.

The APS/APRL are non-profit organizations, 501(c)(3) under the Internal Revenue Code

4. **Fostering Friendly Relationships and Cooperation among Philatelists.** FIP statutes clearly state that one of the objectives of the FIP is to foster friendly relationships and cooperation among philatelists worldwide and to support international philately. To this end, we propose that FIP explore the possibility of annually providing a fixed amount, perhaps 100,000 CHF, for the purpose of promoting FIP and how it serves international philately. Additionally, we believe the FIP should sponsor a lounge with refreshments for the exclusive use of the exhibitors, at no expense to them. Finally, every three years the FIP should host a rotating Continental Exhibition in each of the Continental Federations helping to underwrite the expense to the host organizing committee.

**GOVERNANCE.** We believe the structure and rules which govern FIP contribute to the perception of corrupt practices within the organization. Specifically, we propose changes in the following areas: policies for electing the FIP president, the composition of the vice presidents board, the management of FIP's financial assets, and voting procedures for Grand Prix awards.

1. **Policies for Electing the FIP President.** Article 25 of the FIP Statutes states that the president may serve no more than two terms. In the spirit of equal representation, we propose that statutes of FIP be revised to stipulate that the presidency will rotate among the three Continental areas (Asia, Europe and the Americas). This means that only candidates from the Continental area whose turn it is to hold the presidency may stand for election. Of course, all member countries would still vote for their choice for president from among those standing for election from the continental areas as they rotate their turns.

2. **Composition of the Vice Presidents Board.** Articles 23.1b, 23.1c, and Article 30.4 state that each Continental Federation will have a representative vice president and Board member who is elected by the entire membership of FIP. This practice is contrary to every precept of representative democracy. The Continental Federations should elect their own vice presidents and Board members. The Americas should have no vote in electing the Asian vice president. Likewise, the Asian FIP members should not be involved in electing the vice president to represent the European area. We propose the FIP statutes be changed to direct that each Continental area will be fully responsible for electing their own representative to the board of directors.

3. **Management of FIP's Financial Assets.** FIP statutes do not provide for openness and transparency in the management of its financial assets. Accordingly, we propose that FIP's annual financial statement detail all investments, by name, and reflect the performance of each of these investments. Further, we request that the statutes be amended to stipulate that neither FIP officials nor their family members may participate in the management or ownership of investments in the FIP portfolio. Additionally, we propose that FIP's annual financial statement be reviewed at the annual in-person Board meeting and then posted on the FIP website.

4. **Voting Procedures for Grand Prix Awards.** Current provisions for selecting the three Grand Prix awards provide for secret ballot by jury members. In the interest of promoting openness, transparency, and accountability, we propose that voting be by roll call during the jury proceedings.

**CONCLUSION.** The adoption of these proposals will be a strong signal that FIP recognizes that action needs to be taken to address the increasing criticism, and that FIP remains committed to supporting and representing the best in international exhibiting practices.

Sincerely,



Mitchell M. Zais, Ph.D.  
President, American Philatelic Society

CC: Board Members, Fédération Internationale de Philatélie  
Board Members, American Philatelic Society  
FIP Continental Federations  
FIP National Federations  
President, American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors