



International Relations Report – Congress 2019 **By Peter Micheler, Chair of International Relations Committee**

13 & 15 May, Tully, Queensland, Australia

In October 2017 the IRF Congress unanimously voted to apply for GAISF membership as they now offer an Observer Status for those countries who may not be able to fulfil all the requirements. The only requirement the IRF is short on is members who are recognised by their National Olympic Committee (NOC) or National Sports Authority (NSA). 40 are needed and the IRF is not quite there yet, but hopes to be there within the year.

The main reason for this is that many sports authorities require the IRF to be a member of GAISF in the first place. A typical hen and egg situation. And in other countries it is very hard to become NOC or NSA recognised as they require a certain number of clubs in all regions in their country to be members of their national federation, which is hard when some regions have no rafting.

In early 2018 we were surprised by a few of our members when they created an organisation in direct opposition to the IRF, calling themselves the WRF. This group has proclaimed themselves to be the world governing body for rafting with a stated desire to put our sport under the control of the International Canoe Federation. It is highly likely our decision to apply for GAISF membership triggered this action.

We were only given 3 weeks to get our GAISF application in. We had been working on it since Congress 2017 so fortunately with a last major effort we managed to get everything in to the GAISF headquarters in Lausanne/Switzerland by the deadline of 6 April 2018.

Shortly after that we were once again surprised when it was reported that a MoU Memorandum of Understanding was signed between WRF and ICF, but details have not been released that inform us or anyone of what was agreed or disagreed. Therefore we do not believe that it has any significant effect on rafting or the IRF. However, the ICF has, since then, stated directly to us that they recognise our long association with rafting, and the tireless work we have carried out to promote the sport, and that they would be very happy to explore building communications with IRF and establishing a framework that will work towards further promotion of rafting.

The GAISF membership committee demands only one organisation can represent a sport internationally. We are also aware that this is where our application is being held up. The IRF's major aim therefore is to strive towards ensuring there is only one obvious organisation overseeing rafting in the world. With a 22 year history in the sport, 17 WRC, 12 ERC, 26 WC series events and 197 EC Series events we are well established as that.

The IRF has built up relationships of support with the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) and International Surfing Association (ISA). We are also establishing ourselves with many other organisations.

The 2019 Sport Accord Conference is being held in Brisbane from the 5 – 10 May 2019. The IRF will be represented there by our President, Joe Willis Jones. Discussing our application with GAISF delegates will be a major aim, as well as meetings with many other delegates from other organisations. A full report will be given at the Congress in Tully. We hope to bring good news on this.