



## **THIRTEENTH WORLD RUGBY GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2017**

### **MINUTES**

**MINUTES OF THE 13<sup>th</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**WORLD RUGBY**

**ROYAL GARDEN HOTEL, LONDON**

**MONDAY NOVEMBER 13 AND TUESDAY NOVEMBER 14, 2017**

**PRESENT**

Bill Beaumont (Chairman)  
Agustin Pichot (Vice-Chairman – Argentina)  
John Jeffrey and Mark Dodson (Scotland)  
Pat Whelan and John O'Driscoll (Ireland)  
Gareth Davies and Anthony Buchanan (Wales)  
Jonathan Webb and Stephen Brown (England)  
Brett Robinson and Bill Pulver (Australia)  
Mark Robinson and Steve Tew (New Zealand)  
Mark Alexander and Jurie Roux (South Africa)  
Bernard Laporte and Serge Simon (France)  
Carlos Araujo (Argentina)  
Alfredo Gavazzi and Nino Sacca (Italy)  
Pat Parfrey (Canada)  
Ichiro Kono (Japan)  
George Nijaradze (Georgia)  
Alin Petrache (Romania)  
Bob Latham (United States of America)  
Octavian Morariu (Rugby Europe)  
Trevor Gregory (Asia Rugby)  
Abdelaziz Bougja (Rugby Africa)  
Dennis Dwyer (Rugby Americas North)  
Marcello Rodriguez (Sudamerica Rugby)  
Richard Sapias (Oceania Rugby)

Brett Gosper (Chief Executive Officer)  
Robert Brophy (Head of Finance)  
David Carrigy (Head of Development & International Relations)  
Mark Egan (Head of Competitions & Performance)  
Alan Gilpin (Chief Operating Officer/Head of RWC)  
Mark Harrington (Head of Technical Services)  
Tom Hill (Head of Commercial)  
Alistair Maclean (General Counsel)  
Dominic Rumbles (Head of Communications)

## **UNIONS REPRESENTED**

### **Full Member Unions in Attendance**

American Samoa Rugby Football Union  
Asociacion Deportiva Nacional de Rugby  
Australian Rugby Union  
Austrian Rugby Union  
Bahamas Rugby Football Union  
Barbados Rugby Football Union  
Belgium Rugby Union  
Bermuda Rugby union  
Botswana Rugby Union  
Brazilian Rugby Union  
Brunei Rugby Football Union  
Bulgarian Rugby Federation  
Cameroon Rugby Union  
Cayman Rugby Football Union  
China Rugby Football Association  
Chinese Taipei Rugby Football Union  
Cook Islands Rugby Union  
Croatian Rugby Union  
Cyprus Rugby Federation  
Czech Rugby Union  
Dansk Rugby Union  
Deutscher Rugby-Verband  
Federação Portuguesa Rugby  
Federació Andorrana de Rugbi  
Federación Colombiana de Rugby  
Federación Española de Rugby  
Federacion Mexicana de Rugby  
Federación Venezolana de Rugby  
Federatia de Rugby din Moldovei  
Fédération Maliene de Rugby  
Fédération Burundaise de Rugby  
Fédération Francaise de Rugby  
Fédération Ivoirienne de Rugby  
Fédération Luxembourgeoise de Rugby  
Fédération Malagasy of Rugby  
Fédération Monégasque de Rugby  
Federation Peruana De Rugby  
Fédération Royale Marocaine de Rugby  
Fédération Sénégalaise de Rugby  
Fédération Tahitienne de Rugby de Polynésie França  
Fédération Tunisienne de Rugby  
Federazione Italiana Rugby  
Fiji Rugby Union  
Finnish Rugby Federation  
Georgia Rugby Union

Ghana Rugby Union  
Guam Rugby Football Union  
Hong Kong Rugby Union  
Hungarian Rugby Union  
Indian Rugby Football Union  
Irish Rugby Football Union  
Israel Rugby Union  
Jamaica Rugby Football Union  
Japan Rugby Football Union  
Kenya Rugby Union  
Latvian Rugby Federation  
Lithuanian rugby federation  
Malaysia Rugby Union  
Malta Rugby Football Union  
Namibia Rugby Union  
New Zealand Rugby Union  
Niue Rugby Football Union  
Norwegian Rugby Federation  
Pakistan Rugby Union  
Persatuan Rugby Union Indonesia  
Philippine Rugby Football Union  
Polish Rugby Union  
Rugby Canada  
Rugby Football Union  
Rugby Nederland  
Rugby Union Mauritius  
Rugby Union Of Russia  
Rugby Union of Serbia  
Rugby zveza Slovenije  
Rwanda Rugby Federation  
Samoa Rugby Union  
Scottish Rugby Union  
Singapore Rugby Union  
Solomon Islands RUF  
Sri Lanka Rugby Union  
St Vincent & the Grenadines RU  
St. Lucia Rugby Football Union  
Swaziland Rugby Union  
Swedish Rugby Federation  
Swiss Rugby Union  
Thai Rugby Union  
Tonga Rugby Union  
Trinidad & Tobago Rugby Football Union  
Uganda Rugby Union  
Ukrainian Rugby  
Unión Argentina de Rugby  
Union de Rugby del Paraguay  
Unión de Rugby del Uruguay  
United Arab Emirates Rugby Federation  
USA Rugby

Vanuatu Rugby Football Union  
Welsh Rugby Union  
Zambia Rugby Union

**Associate Member Unions in Attendance**

British Virgin Islands Rugby Union  
Federacion de Rugby de Costa Rica  
Cyprus Rugby Federation  
Iran Rugby Association  
Lao Rugby Union  
Mongolian Rugby Union  
Fédération Rwandaise de Rugby  
St. Lucia Rugby Football Union  
Fédération Togolaise de Rugby  
Uzbekistan Rugby Football Union

**Apologies were received from the following absent Full Member Unions**

Fédération Royale Marocaine de Rugby

**Apologies were received from the following absent Associate Member Unions**

Azerbaijan Rugby Union  
Kyrgyzstan Rugby Union  
Tanzania Rugby Union  
Fédération Burundaise de Rugby  
Uzbekistan Rugby Football Union

## 1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman, Bill Beaumont, extended a warm welcome to John Spencer, President of the Rugby Football Union and all the delegates on the occasion of the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of World Rugby in London, England.

The Chairman noted that every branch of the World Rugby Family was represented with almost all of the Unions, Regional Associations, World Rugby Council and World Rugby staff in attendance. He added that the last time World Rugby had gathered in this room, it was during the final stages of a very special and record-breaking Rugby World Cup 2015.

The Chairman noted that it was appropriate and exciting to return to London, just a few days before World Rugby select the host union for Rugby World Cup 2023, to reflect on progress made since 2015 General Assembly.

The Chairman advised the delegates that the 2017 General Assembly was an opportunity for the Rugby family to collectively look to the future to consider the opportunities and challenges which must be embraced together. The Chairman explained the General Assembly would be devoted to looking ahead, to progress key strategies that will strengthen the game and deliver solid platforms for accelerated and sustainable growth in participation, audience share and commercial value.

The Chairman noted that it was rapidly-changing times for our sport and advised the General Assembly that together with Agustin Pichot, the World Rugby Vice-Chairman, they had been elected on a mandate to deliver strong leadership, to strengthen our base, protect the welfare of our players, strengthen our governance structures and evolve the role of World Rugby as a game-inspirer and partner to our unions and regions.

The Chairman outlined to the General Assembly that much progress had been made during the first year in office. The Chairman added that after meeting with and listening to the needs of the Unions World Rugby had:

- Implemented the new governance model, providing a pathway for all unions to council;
- Delivered an equitable 2020-2032 men's fifteens competition calendar, and continue to work to develop a women's calendar;
- Delivered eligibility reform, that ringfences the prestige of national representation
- Secured long-term Olympic Games participation and;
- Council would select the host union for Rugby World Cup 2023 after an extensive, transparent and competitive process.

The Chairman thanked the Unions for their immense contribution to the game at an international and domestic level whilst acknowledging that Unions are feeling pain in attracting and retaining participants in particular.

The Chairman noted that sport is currently at a crossroads and added that rugby is no different. The Chairman acknowledged that at a time when there is unprecedented entertainment choice, intense competition for participants and an evolution in the way young people consume rugby, World Rugby needs to evolve, to be relevant, be exciting and inspire the next generation of Players.

The Chairman advised that during the General Assembly, the delegates would discuss World Rugby's most pressing challenges and consider the opportunities it has to tackle them such as:

- Considering player and fan retention strategies
- Considering player welfare best-practice

- Examine the women's plan – an important and exciting blueprint to accelerate women's rugby and women in rugby

The Chairman concluded that the General Assembly would be a thought provoking process and he encouraged all delegates to engage fully and devote their energies to thinking about the important agenda topics. He added the contributions of the delegates will guide the way forward to ensure that Rugby is accessible to all, inclusive, sustainable and continues to reach out to more men, women and children around the world.

## **2. OFFICAL OPENING OF THE 13<sup>TH</sup> WORLD RUGBY GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The Chairman, Bill Beaumont, invited John Spencer, President of the Rugby Football Union to officially open the 13<sup>th</sup> World Rugby General Assembly.

Mr Spencer extended a warm welcome on behalf of the Rugby Football Union and the Rugby people of England to the delegates on the occasion of their visit to England for the World Rugby General Assembly.

Mr Spencer noted that rugby was unique in the way that lifetime friendships are formed through the game and he was delighted to reacquaint himself with many friends in the game he has made over the years at the General Assembly. Mr. Spencer highlighted the values of rugby and the importance of ensuring that these values are maintained within our game to ensure the continued growth of Rugby.

Mr Spencer concluded that he was looking forward to being part of the World Rugby General Assembly and looked forward to welcoming and meeting as many of the delegates as possible during the World Rugby General Assembly.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Spencer for his kind words and made a presentation to Mr Spencer as a token of appreciation of World Rugby for Mr Spencer attending the 13<sup>th</sup> World Rugby General Assembly.

## **3. MINUTES OF THE 12<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The Minutes of the 12<sup>TH</sup> General Assembly of World Rugby held in London, England in October 26 – 27, 2015 were received and approved. There were no matters arising.

## **4. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL**

The meeting noted the composition of the Committees of the World Rugby Council.

## **5. GLOBAL FINANCIAL OUTLOOK FOR WORLD RUGBY**

Following an introduction from Mr. Jurie Roux, Chairman of the World Rugby Budget Advisory Committee the meeting received a presentation as set out in **APPENDIX ONE** from Robert Brophy, World Rugby Head of Finance on the current position relating to World Rugby Finances.

## **6. SUSTAINING THE GROWTH OF RUGBY**

Following from the introduction by Mr Trevor Gregory, Chairman of the World Rugby Regional Committee, the meeting received a presentation from Aurelie Lemouzy, World Rugby Development Programme Manager as set out in **APPENDIX TWO**, detailing World Rugby growth initiatives throughout the Region.

Following from the presentation by Ms Lemouzy an interactive Forum on sustaining the growth of the Rugby throughout the Regional Associations. Mr Gregory was joined on the panel by:

- Abdelaziz Bougja – President of Rugby Africa and World Rugby Council Member
- Octavian Morariu – President of Rugby Europe, International Olympic Committee and World Rugby Council Member
- Marcello Rodríguez – President of Sudamerica Rugby and World Rugby Council Member
- Richard Sapias – President of Oceania Rugby and World Rugby Council Member
- Miguel Carner – President of Rugby Americas North
- Koji Tokumasu – President of Asia Rugby

The topic was then opened for a question and answer session to the General Assembly.

## 7. **PLAYER WELFARE**

Following an introduction from Dr. Brett Robinson, World Rugby Executive Committee member, the meeting received a presentation as set out in **APPENDIX THREE** from Dr Martin Raftery, World Rugby Chief Medical Officer, on Player Welfare initiatives. Dr Raftery advised the meeting that Player Welfare is World Rugby's number one priority and highlighted progress in the area of Player Welfare since the 12<sup>th</sup> General Assembly held in October 2015.

Following from the Player Welfare presentation by Dr Raftery an interactive Forum on Player Welfare was hosted. Dr Raftery was joined on the panel by:

- Dr Brett Robinson – World Rugby Executive Committee
- Mark Harrington – World Rugby Head of Technical Services
- Jock Peggie – World Rugby Training Manager
- Mike Hislop – Technical Services Department Researcher
- James Fitzgerald - Communications Manager

The topic was then opened for a question and answer session to the General Assembly.

The Player Welfare session concluded with a presentation from Mike Hislop, World Rugby Technical Services Researcher, on the Activate Injury Prevention Programme which is set out in **APPENDIX THREE**.

## 8. **HIGH PERFORMANCE INVESTMENT – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

Following an introduction from Mr. John Jeffrey, Chairman of the World Rugby, Rugby Committee the meeting received a presentation as set out in **APPENDIX FOUR** from Mark Egan, World Rugby Head of Competitions and Performance and Peter Horne, World Rugby High Performance General Manager detailing how World Rugby delivers its High Performance objectives globally.

Following from the High Performance Investment presentation, an interactive Forum on the topics raised during the presentation was hosted. Mr Horne was joined on the panel by:

- Agustin Pichot – World Rugby Vice Chairman
- John O'Connor – Fiji Rugby CEO
- Lasha Khurtsidze - Georgia Rugby Head of Performance
- Mike McGovern - High Performance Consultant Asia-Pacific
- Dr. Calvin Morriss - High Performance Consultant Euro-Atlantic



The topic was then opened for a question and answer session to the General Assembly.

## 9. WORLD RUGBY PRESENTATION

Brett Gosper, CEO/Secretary General of World Rugby welcomed the delegates to the 13<sup>th</sup> World Rugby General Assembly.

Mr. Gosper noted that the General Assembly represents the present and future of the game and by working together in full partnership, we can ensure that rugby grows on every front. Mr Gosper added that though World Rugby is a federation, it should be more thought of as a movement with a purpose that is believed in by an increasing number of people which is a status most modern organisations seek.

Mr Gosper told the meeting that he is often asked by the media and by those in the commercial sector what's the role of World Rugby? What is World Rugby's vision and mission and how are World Rugby delivering on our strategic goals. Mr Gosper noted that as members, the General Assembly will know what World Rugby mean when we say a *sport for all, true to its values*, and will understand World Rugby's overriding goal is to *grow the global game of rugby*. Mr Gosper added that it is clear from the hard work and passionate commitment of everyone at the General Assembly that they support the strategic goals which they played a part in defining and refining such as:

- Drive player welfare best practice;
- Protect and promote rugby, its values, spirit and ethos;
- Increase global participation;
- Maximise commercial values and increase the financial sustainability of international rugby;
- Ensure the success of Olympic participation;
- Provide strong inspirational leadership;

Mr Gosper recalled that three years ago, World Rugby announced a new brand identity ushering in a new era for rugby's governing body. Mr Gosper reflected that the change of name and visual identity has had a profound effect. Mr Gosper noted that World Rugby is now less likely to be accused of been an aloof, ivory-towered, faceless organisation. Mr Gosper highlighted that World Rugby is an inclusive federation, is something everyone can relate to and feel a part of.

Mr Gosper highlighted that in World Rugby everyone has a say whether it is at the General Assembly, the boardroom, on the field or as a fan, World Rugby is for all who have a physical or emotional connection with the sport, and everyone is welcome.

Mr Gosper advised the General Assembly that Across the board, World Rugby had seen great advances in player welfare, a subject very close to our hearts and in particular in the priority area of concussion. World Rugby have had further compliance and HIA success with 92% of players with a concussion correctly removed across 22 elite competitions, compared to 88% in 2014 and only 44% before the HIA was introduced in 2012, Mr Gosper stated World Rugby are world leaders in the area of head injury management. Mr Gosper added that World Rugby also took greater steps in our movement from injury management to Injury prevention, illustrated by the zero-tolerance high tackle application and recent joint meeting of defence coaches and medics.

Mr Gosper advised the General Assembly that in March 2017, World Rugby reached an agreement on the 2020-2032 tour calendar that will promote certainty, equity, excitement and an increased emphasis on player welfare. Mr Gosper added that importantly, the revised calendar will see 39% more Tier One versus Tier Two matches, bringing the total number to 110 over that period.

Mr Gosper noted that one of the best on-field highlights in 2017 was undoubtedly the record-breaking Women's Rugby World Cup. Mr Gosper advised that it was the best attended, most viewed and most socially engaged Women's Rugby World Cup ever with:

- 2.8 million viewers tuned in to watch the thrilling final between New Zealand and England in the UK - the largest single audience for a Women's RWC final (France v England game over 3m in France);
- We had 40 million video views across all World Rugby's digital platforms;
- And we delivered a compelling event that saw the ball in play, on average, 10% longer than in the men's game.

Mr Gosper added that the tournament created a step change in more ways than one as World Rugby continue its mission to launch a new strategic Women's Plan 2017-2025 that is not just about boosting women's rugby, but about more women in rugby at all levels. Not just women's Rugby but Women in Rugby.

Mr Gosper advised the General Assembly that in May 2017, Council made historic governance reform to increase the number of Representatives on Council that will further women's representation on World Rugby's highest decision-making body, as World Rugby continues to modernise its structures in line with the 2015 governance changes.

Mr Gosper noted that significantly, World Rugby also progressed a law review process that is delivering attractive, exciting rugby in the current trials. Mr Gosper added that the law amendments, which have player welfare at heart, are aimed at simplifying the sport for players, coaches, referees and, of course, fans.

Mr Gosper advised the General Assembly that Rugby World Cup 2023 host selection process comes to a conclusion and the Interim Meeting of Council to be held the following day. Mr Gosper outline that this had been the most comprehensive, robust, transparent and independent processes in sport, a process that by design will deliver the best-possible outcome for the tournament and for rugby as a whole.

Mr Gosper spoke of the anticipation, which was building ahead of Japan 2019, the country's biggest sporting event in more than a decade. Mr Gosper noted that the draw in May 2017 was the moment when the event truly came alive for players and fans.

Mr Gosper advised that World Rugby had announced the match schedule, including rest day balance and a greater spread of pool matches across the week, as well as kick-off times optimised for the Japanese market and global audience. Mr Gosper highlighted that it will be a tournament that is accessible for all of Japan. Mr Gosper outlined that the 48 matches will be spread across 12 host cities the length and breadth of the nation, with each match venue hosting a minimum of two matches.

Mr Gosper noted that judging by World Rugby successes in 2017 we can look to the future with excitement, Mr Gosper highlighted that the successes have been underpinned, as always, by World Rugby's character-building values and our strong sense of community. Mr Gosper added that it is this identity, this embodiment of a team that will be critical to rugby's future and continued prosperity. Mr Gosper noted that Rugby is in rude health at that moment with overall participation and fan-base numbers having increased over the previous five years. Mr Gosper noted that Rugby has over 8.5 million players,

25% of them are women and growing, while in 2016, 1.99m girls and boys were attracted to the game through your Get into Rugby activities.

Mr Gosper noted that Sport is at a crossroads. Mr Gosper outlined that with unprecedented entertainment choice, the average age of sporting TV audiences is increasing, the audiences themselves are decreasing and sport is losing connection with the next generation. Mr Gosper highlighted that this is keenly felt in Rugby's traditional markets where overall fan populations and TV audiences are gently on the decline and therefore if World Rugby is to make good its mission to grow the global rugby family it must evolve and adapt.

Mr Gosper advised the General Assembly that Rugby must grasp the future and seek to attract new participants and fans via the new platforms that they engage with, in a tone of voice that they can relate to.

Mr Gosper noted that it was the current environment which underpinned World Rugby's 2018 priorities, which are focused on collective and sustainable global growth, inspiration and growing our audiences through attractive content and events. Mr Gosper outlined that the key priorities for 2018 would include

- Delivering an exceptional Rugby World Cup Sevens in San Francisco and Commonwealth Games that furthers brand sevens in new markets as we accelerate towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games
- Establishing a new HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series hosting model beyond 2020 and development of a Tier 2 competition that provides a compelling and competitive pathway
- Developing a new fifteens international competitions model for Tier 2 that furthers reach and exposure and drives competitiveness of the international game
- And ensuring that Rugby World Cup preparations are on track to optimise the opportunity of hosting Asia's first Rugby World Cup
- Implementing a programme that focuses on participation retention in fifteens rugby in partnership with unions and regions
- Implementing the key pillars of a step changing 2017-2025 Women's Plan – a major inspiration and growth opportunity
- And working to increase capacity in our unions and regions to train and educate coaches, referees and medical personnel
- Adopting a new content strategy that will boost rugby's ability to connect, engage and inspire new audiences, and in particular the youth audience. This is critical to our future.
- Furthering our focus on player welfare research to develop evidence-based programmes that reduce the risk of injury in rugby
- And developing and implementing a new commercial rights strategy that energises and innovates to grow the pot for all and deliver a return on investment programme for major markets

Mr Gosper concluded that World Rugby has and continues to evolve to better suit the moving needs of the unions and regions and the global sporting landscape. Mr Gosper highlighted that World Rugby need strong collaboration and partnership, in order to

tackle the challenges and grasp the opportunities that are in front of sport to build a stronger more dynamic and global game for all.

Mr Gosper thank the General Assembly delegates and their Unions for the incredible work they do every day to grow rugby and promote its values worldwide and added he looked forward to sharing many more successes with then in 2018.

#### 10. **RUGBY WORLD CUP SEVENS SAN FRANCISCO 2018**

The meeting received a presentation from Mr Dan Payne, Chief Executive Officer, USA Rugby as set out in **APPENDIX FIVE**, detailing the preparations for the Rugby World Cup Sevens to be held in San Francisco in July 2018.

#### 11. **ACCELERATING THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN RUGBY**

Following an introduction from Mr Bill Pulver, World Rugby Women's Advisory Committee Chairman, the meeting received a presentation as set out in **APPENDIX SIX** from Ms Katie Sadleir, World Rugby General Manager for Women's Rugby, detailing the World Rugby Women's Plans and outlining initiatives to increase female participation in rugby.

The topic was then opened for a question and answer session to the General Assembly.

#### 12. **.RUGBY**

Following an introduction from Mr. Dominic Rumbles, World Rugby Head of Communications, the meeting received a presentation as set out in **APPENDIX SEVEN** from Mr. Ryan Nelson and Hamish Miller of ROAR Domains on Dot Rugby, which was an exciting new development for World Rugby and an historic and significant milestone for rugby's digital presence.

#### 13. **INSPIRE STRATEGY**

Following an introduction from Mr Agustin Pichot, World Rugby Vice-Chairman, the meeting received a presentation as set out in **APPENDIX EIGHT** from Dominic Rumbles, World Rugby Head of Communication detailing the World Rugby Women's Plans and outlining initiatives to increase female participation in rugby.

Following from the Inspire Strategy presentation and Workshop an interactive Forum on the topics raised was hosted. Mr Rumbles was joined on the panel by:

- Ada Milby – Secretary General, Philippine Rugby Football Union
- Klaus Blank – President, Deutscher Rugby-Verband
- Nigel Cass – Chief Strategy and Operations Officer, New Zealand Rugby Union
- Dominic McKay - Chief Operating Officer, Scottish Rugby Union

The topic was then opened for a question and answer session to the General Assembly.

The meeting received a presentation as set out in **APPENDIX EIGHT** from James Abraham, World Rugby Programming and Content Manager detailing World Rugby's content and social media ambitions and strategy.

#### 14. **CLOSURE**

In formally closing the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly the Mr. Agustin Pichot, Vice-Chairman Chairman of World Rugby, highlighted the key points of the General Assembly programme

The Vice-Chairman passionately spoke about the importance of the role of rugby clubs and all Unions around the world which through the passion and friendship of the parents, the coaches and the volunteers ensure the values of our Game are instilled in players who ultimately become the top players in the world and the inspirations to children and the next generation of players.

The Vice-Chairman emphasised that if the Unions continue to show this passion for our Game and continue to instil the values of the Game in our players, the Game can only continue to grow and thrive. The Vice-Chairman thanked the Unions for their commitment and passion to grow the game.

In conclusion, the Vice-Chairman expressed the thanks and appreciation of World Rugby for the attendance and the constructive participation of all delegates throughout the two days of the general assembly. The Vice-Chairman further thanked the presenter and panellists for their engaging content.

**Bill Beaumont CBE DL**  
**Chairman**  
**World Rugby**

**November 14, 2017**

# **BUILDING CHARACTER SINCE 1886**