



Latvia Draughts Federation
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To:

President of the FMJD Mr. Janek Mäggi

General Secretary of the FMJD Mr. Yyriy Chertok

Draughts Federation of the Netherlands (KNDB)

Chairman of the Ethics Committee Mr. Bert Bakhuis

Chairman of the Technical Committee Ms. Kristi Promet

Chairman of the Players Committee Mr. Jean Marc Ndjofang

For information:

Director of International Relations, FMJD, Mr. Harry Otten
All national draughts federations

On the latest decision on a match for the World Title

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Latvia Draughts Federation (LDF) received a letter signed on 18 February by the President of the FMJD Mr. Janek Mäggi and the Secretary General of the FMJD Mr. Yyriy Chertok explaining the rationale behind the latest decision of the Executive Board of the FMJD on a match for the World Title and the choice of players. The letter was in response to our 2 February 2021 request for information on decisions regarding a match for the World Title and informing that Mr. Guntis Valneris, as the next player on the reserve list, would have been ready to play against Mr. Roel Boomstra in the Netherlands, had the LDF been contacted, which was not done.

Taking into account the response, the Latvia Draughts Federation requests that the

FMJD Executive Council:

- 1) reconsider its decision regarding the World Title match and **cancel the World Title match in Autumn 2021** because the World Championship in Tallinn starts a new cycle of the competition for the World Title;
- 2) if the FMJD Executive Council nevertheless considers the World Title match necessary to hold, we are of the opinion that Mr. Guntis Valneris deserves a right to play this match against Mr. Roel Boomstra, as he was ready to play while Mr. Georgijev had refused to play and Mr. Pan Yiming also was not able to participate, and the Latvia Draughts Federation informed you on 2 February about Mr. Guntis Valneris' readiness to play before the decision of the FMJD Executive Council;
- 3) if the FMJD Executive Council nevertheless considers it necessary to hold the World Title match in Autumn 2021, the FMJD should **not grant any privileges** to the winner of the match regarding next World Title match in 2022.

We reiterate the arguments supporting this request (see also communication in the annexes to this letter):

Article 11 of Annex 17 sets the procedure for deciding who participates in matches:

Article 11 states the following – 11. *Right for the World Title Match. If the ex-champion has lost his title in the tournament for the World Championship, he has the right to challenge the new champion to a World Title Match. If the ex-champion has retained his title in the World Championship tournament, the player ended on the second place in the World Championship has the right to challenge the current World Champion to a World Title Match. When a World Title Match cannot be played, the World Champion keeps his title but does not have the right for a title match two years later. Then this right for a title match goes to the numbers 1 and 2 of the World Championship tournament. When the conditions for the world title match are acceptable for the FMJD Executive Council, the players have the obligation to play (unless they come with a better possibility). If one of them does not accept the conditions, a reserve may take his place. The reserve is the next player from the last World Championship tournament.*

- 1) **Article 11 is still in force.** The omission of Article 11 and Annex 17 from the Annexes published on the FMJD website was due to a mechanical error, therefore the Executive Council considers Article 11 still to be in force, according to the February 18 letter.
- 2) [Article 11] ... When the conditions for the world title match are acceptable for the FMJD Executive Council, the players have the obligation to play (unless they come with a better possibility).

We believe that the decision of the FMJD Executive Council about a postponement of the match was not properly justified because all options foreseen by Article 11 were not explored. On 28 January, the FMJD received a letter from the KNDB (Draughts Federation of the Netherlands) requesting that the World Title match be postponed because of the planned mass vaccination of the Dutch population and

expected mass immunity by Autumn 2021. Planned mass vaccination and expected mass immunity cannot in any way serve as an excuse to postpone a match if other options were not exhausted. As far as we know, there have been no travel restrictions from Latvia to the Netherlands during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the existence of the so-called British variant of Covid-19 was already known in December, this did not deter the FMJD and KNDB from entering into discussions with Mr. Pan Yiming on playing the World Title match in the Netherlands, which means that the FMJD Executive Council considered the conditions acceptable for the world title. Both the Netherlands and Latvia are members of the European Union Schengen Area of free travel, and **Mr. Guntis Valneris would have been ready and willing to play the World Title match in the Netherlands or Latvia**, had the LDF been informed of the possibility. As we mentioned earlier in an e-mail to the FMJD, the Covid-19 situation in the Netherlands had been improving, with a five-fold decrease in new infections between mid-December and February.

- 3) [Article 11] ... *the players have the obligation to play (unless they come with a better possibility. If one of them does not accept the conditions, a reserve may take his place. The reserve is the next player from the last World Championship tournament.* Talks with Mr. Pan Yiming were justified in accordance with Article 11. FMJD replied that Mr. Alexander Georgijev gave the “green light” to the FMJD to talk to other potential candidates about playing a match against Mr. Roel Boomstra, thereby, in our opinion, irreversibly losing the right to play the World Title match against Roel Boomstra. However, Mr. Pan Yiming also was not able to participate in the World Title match because of restrictions imposed by authorities of the Netherlands. Since, in principle, Mr. Pan Yiming did not use the opportunity to play, it could be interpreted that he also lost his right to play the World Title match. Next in line after Mr. Pan Yiming was Mr. Guntis Valneris, as both Mr. Alexander Georgijev and Mr. Pan Yiming gave up their opportunity to play the match against Roel Boomstra, thereby in our opinion irreversibly losing the right to play the World Title match against Roel Boomstra. It should be also underlined that if Pan Yiming had agreed and had been able to play a match against Roel Boomstra, there would have been no option available for Alexander Georgijev to have a match against Mr. Rorel Boomstra in Autumn 2021.
- 4) *The reserve is the next player from the last World Championship tournament.* Therefore, in accordance with Article 11, **the right to play should go to Mr. Guntis Valneris as the next player from the reserve list from the last World Championship**. In this situation, the decision of the FMJD Executive Council cannot be considered ethical, as Mr. Guntis Valneris and the Latvia Draughts Federation was not even contacted on this matter immediately after Mr. Pan Yiming’s refusal and the KNDB subsequent proposal. In our view, when the FMJD received information from the KNDB that the match could not be played in the Netherlands, the FMJD needed to approach Mr. Guntis Valneris and the Latvia Draughts Federation on the opportunity to have a World Title match between Mr. Roel Boomstra and Mr. Guntis Valneris in Latvia, however this was not done.

- 5) **The World Title match should be played in the first part of 2021 or it should be cancelled altogether**, as the World Championship in Tallinn in June and July 2021 starts new cycle of the competition for the World Title.
- 6) **This situation is not exceptional.** In its reply, the FMJD refers to Article 13 of the Annex 17 that all exceptional cases should be dealt with by the Executive Board. As it was mentioned earlier, Article 11 of the Annex 17 has a regulation for such a situation (therefore it cannot be considered an exceptional situation irrespective of what has caused situation that World Title cannot be played) and clearly indicates what should happen if such a situation arises: *When a World Title Match cannot be played, the World Champion keeps his title but does not have the right for a title match two years later. Then this right for a title match goes to the numbers 1 and 2 of the World Championship tournament.*

To summarise, we are of the opinion that this situation could not be considered as exceptional and the FMJD Executive Council ignored and violated its regulations (Article 11 of the Annex 17). It also should be mentioned once again that Mr. Alexander Georgijev refused to play World Title match so, in fact, he lost this right. Despite this, after KNDB submitted information that the World Title match would not be played before World Championship in Tallinn, the FMJD Executive Council reverted back to the option of the World Title match between Mr. Alexander Georgijev (who by refusing to play had relinquished the right to the World Title match) and Mr. Roel Boomstra. This, most likely, was agreed by all involved parties (both players, KNDB and FMJD Executive Council). In our view, this action is incompatible with the principles of sports ethics and fair play and impacts trust to and credibility of the FMJD.

For these reasons, we kindly **ask the Ethics Committee, Players Committee and Technical Committee of the FMJD to formulate their respective opinions** on this situation of the World Title match and send the Latvia Draughts Federation their respective opinions, including answers to the questions below and views on whether actions and decisions of the FMJD Executive Council and other involved parties are compatible with Article 11 of the FMJD Annexes and Code of Ethics of the FMJD and what should be the next steps.

For the Committees to be able to formulate their opinions, we request that **the FMJD Executive Council, and Draughts Federation of the Netherlands (KNDB) provide the abovementioned Committees and the Latvia Draughts Federation answers** to the following questions:

- 1) Do you consider it to be ethical and fair to agree on the postponing the World Title match between Mr. Alexander Georgijev (who has already refused to play and, in fact, lost his right to play World Title match) and Mr. Roel Boomstra after Pan Yiming was given an opportunity to play but did not use it and Mr. Guntis Valneris was not even contacted as the next reserve player?
- 2) Do you consider the decision of the FMJD Executive Council (to postpone the World Title match, to hold it between Mr. Alexander Georgijev and Mr. Roel Boomstra and to give the winner the right for the next World Title match) to be in conformity with the Article 11 of the Annex 17 which states: *When a World Title Match cannot be*

played, the World Champion keeps his title but does not have the right for a title match two years later. Then this right for a title match goes to the numbers 1 and 2 of the World Championship tournament?

- 3) Do you consider all actions of the FMJD Executive Council related to the World Title match to be compatible with Article 11 of the Annexes and the Code of Ethics of the FMJD, taking into account the abovementioned facts?

The 18 February letter from the President of the FMJD Mr. Janek Mäggi and the Secretary General of the FMJD Mr. Yyriy Chertok suggests establishing a special commission to address the issues that have arisen. This special commission is supposed to include representatives of the FMJD Executive Council, the FMJD Technical Committee and the Ethical Committee. In this respect we have two requirements. First, we require that a representative of the Latvia Draughts Federation is invited to the meeting of this special commission to present our opinion. Second, we strongly insist that only objective (neutral) persons may be selected as members of this special commission, so they are not in any way related to the Netherlands and to the Russian Federation. The representative of the FMJD Board should be a person who did not participate in and was not any way involved in the decision-making process related to the World Title match as well this person should not be representative or affiliate of the Netherlands and the Russian Federation. Only if these requirements will be fully met can we consider this special commission to be truly impartial and its decisions fair and equitable. If these conditions will not be met and fair and equitable decision will not be achieved, we will strongly insist that this subject on World Title match is to be reviewed and reconsidered by the General Assembly on 3 July 2021 in Tallinn.

We look forward to receiving opinions and answers on the abovementioned questions from all the bodies mentioned in this letter as well as receiving information on decisions which the FMJD Executive Council is going to make regarding the previous decision on the World Title match. We enclose all the written communication between the Latvia Draughts Federation and the FMJD as an attachment for the purpose of informing the representatives of the Ethics Committee, Players Committee, Technical Committee of the FMJD and all national draughts federations – members of the FMJD.

In the attachment:

- 1) Letter of Latvia Draughts Federation from 12 February 2021;
- 2) Letter of the President of the FMJD from 18 February 2021;
- 3) An e-mail communication between Latvia Draughts federation and FMJD from 2 February 2021.

Best regards,

Chairman of the Executive Board
of the Latvia Draughts Federation

Vladislavs Vesperis

This letter is signed by digital signature.