

Minutes of the General Assembly of the Members of the Blue Shield

Friday 28 August 2020, 15.00 CEST – 17.45 CEST

On 28 August, the Blue Shield hosted its first online virtual General Assembly. We were delighted to welcome more than 40 representatives from Blue Shield national committees, committees under construction, and the founding four organisations. More than 26 countries from around the world were able to attend the online meeting, hosted via Zoom. Attendees are listed in Appendix 1. The General Assembly was recorded and is available on the Blue Shield YouTube channel¹.

1. Welcome

The meeting began with a welcome from the outgoing President, Karl Habsburg (KH) (full address in Appendix Two). He thanked all the Members of Blue Shield for their incredible work and progress during his tenure as President, calling the experience “enriching” and “an honour”. He expressed his faith in Peter Stone (PGS) to follow him as President, saying *“I have seen so many positive and really great traits in Peter that I can really not think of anybody better to fulfil this function, and to bring Blue Shield to an absolute new level”*. Karl promised Blue Shield would always be “close to his heart” and he insisted that even though his tenure had come to an end, he would be delighted to continue to help however he could. He finished by remarking on the catastrophic explosion in Beirut, which he had visited personally. He highlighted the remarkable work of the volunteers there in cataloguing damaged heritage, and expressed his hope that the work of Blue Shield in Beirut would provide a role model for future Blue Shield work in emergency response, and that we could learn from it. *“The role of Blue Shield and the necessity of Blue Shield activities has hardly ever been seen with such importance and in such a clear way as we have seen in just in the last couple of weeks in Beirut.”*

The Vice-President, PGS, and Secretariat, Emma Cunliffe (EC), explained how the meeting would proceed. Votes were handled via the electronic platform, Election Runner², to ensure anonymous voting. Voting was split into three blocks. At the 2017 General Assembly, members felt that numbers of votes should not be released (particularly for candidates as this made elections a “popularity contest”). However, the 2020 General Assembly Members asked for all results to be released.

2. Block One:

PGS presented block one of the agenda – approving the Agenda and voting on the start dates of the terms of office of members of the Board. Voting took place via the online system Election Runner, and results (and more information) are available online³.

¹ <https://theblueshield.org/bsi-general-assembly-2020/>

² <https://electionrunner.com/>

³ <https://vote.electionrunner.com/election/Bf7jY/results>

Do you agree to adopt the Provisional Agenda as the Final Agenda for this meeting?

Yes 27 No 0 Abstain 0

Do you feel that Terms of Office for Members of the Board should start from 2014, or 2017?

2017 14 2014 12 Abstain 1

The agenda was approved. Terms of Office for the Board are agreed to start from 2017.

3. Block Two:

PGS presented the Report of the Board 2017-2020 and 2020 Annual Report, which were circulated to members one month before the meeting, along with the Financial Report 2017-2020 and the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. He expressed delight that 27 committees are fully registered, one has completed paperwork and is waiting on legal changes to be processed, 5 are under construction, and 10 expressions of interest have been received from around the world, representing a truly global organisation. He called BSI's increasing social media presence "astonishing", and expressed thanks to Marlene Kloster (BS Denmark), Angela Dellebake (BS Netherlands), and Valentina Sabucco (intern) for all their help with the website, social media, and in the office. He noted that some aspirations had been side-lined by the COVID-19 pandemic, but key highlights included the formal agreements arranged with key institutions: the Memorandum of Understanding with the International Committee of the Red Cross; the Letter of Intent with NATO, and the formal agreement to move to a Framework Agreement with UNESCO, which he hoped would be signed soon. Lastly, he highlighted the specialist working groups that are being established by the Board, and the vital work being conducted in Lebanon⁴. *"The way that the National Committee have responded has been amazing, and we have been shown a template of what we are capable of, and I think that is extremely important"*. He emphasised the key point that Blue Shield could not keep relying on Newcastle University, and needed to find regular funding.

No questions were received on the Annual Report before the General Assembly. One question was received via Zoom from Anthea Seles, Secretary-General of ICA, asking about the inclusion of archives in the work of Beirut. PGS clarified that archives very much were and very much are included, but there is no national ICA committee in Lebanon; his point was that the Blue Shield Lebanese National Committee had coordinated with the three other national committees that are in existence in Beirut. That group, led by Blue Shield Lebanon, have been in touch with several archives and have been working with them. IFLA and other library colleagues have been working to protect archives. Emilie Gagnet Leumas (ICA) noted they had been in conversation with more than 20 other people from UNESCO, the Prince Claus Fund, IFLA, and many other colleagues from Beirut, and have reached out to other colleagues; they are actively working to provide information and to work very closely with IFLA because many of the archives are housed in libraries. ICA want to be included in any response, projects, and applications for grant funding that are taking place in Lebanon. ICA are also working to establish a national committee.

⁴ <https://theblueshield.org/bs-president-supports-beirut/>

The Secretary/Treasurer, Manana Tevzadze (MT), presented the Financial Report 2017-2020, highlighting that the Netherlands National Committee are still holding the money from the former bank account until Blue Shield can open a new account. She emphasised the efforts of the Board to open a new account, but noted that without regular funding it was not possible as it would require funding to maintain. No direct funding was received in the reporting period, but Newcastle University continued to support Blue Shield with funding for Secretariat and its travel, and also some direct sums that helped support social media and the website, and some travel for Blue Shield experts to attend events. No questions were submitted.

PGS presented the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan; he emphasised BSI is working towards the same 6 areas of activity as the Board are asking everybody to do. He noted the document was prepared by the Board which is standing down at this General Assembly and therefore will go to the first meeting of the new Board, who may or may not wish to adapt it. The final plan will be circulated after the new Board has reviewed it that meeting. No questions were submitted.

Voting took place via the online system Election Runner: results are available online⁵.

Do you approve the Report of the Board 2017-2020 and 2020 Annual Report?

Yes	32(33*)	No	0	Abstain	0
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Do you approve the Financial Report 2017-2020?

Yes	31(32*)	No	0	Abstain	1
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Do you approve the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan?

Yes	29(30*)	No	2	Abstain	1
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*One person sent an email following the assembly: "I have to apologize for a mistake I made on my PC which stopped me from voting on the second block. I fully support the reports and the strategy without any doubts."

All reports were approved by the General Assembly.

4. Block Three:

All candidates for the Presidency and the Board circulated a biography and statement in advance, and Members were given the opportunity to ask questions in advance, with answers circulated.

The candidate for President, Peter Stone, gave a brief presentation, followed by presentations from the candidates for the Blue Shield International Board: Kidong Bae (Republic of Korea CBS), Hamady Gaye (Senegalese CBS), Lidia Klupsz (Polish CBS), Tanya Parks (Australian CBS) Klaus Weschenfelder (German CBS), Nancy Wilkie (US CBS). The members were given the opportunity to ask the candidates additional questions, and then asked to vote on the new Board. Gerald Leitner, IFLA,

⁵ <https://vote.electionrunner.com/election/XYHEX/results>

queried whether Members would have the opportunity to vote on the position of Vice-President, as the position does not appear in the Articles of Association. PGS explained that the post was created by the previous Board following the 2017 General Assembly with the approval of the legal team in the Netherlands. The post is proposed as an amendment to the Articles of Association. It was hoped to have the amendments ready for this General Assembly; however, as the GA was brought forward, this was not possible. Currently the post the post is Board appointment made at the first meeting of the new Board (October), like the Secretary and Treasurer.

Voting took place via the online system Election Runner, and Results are available Election Runner⁶.

Election for the position of President of Blue Shield International

Peter G. Stone	24	No	0	Abstain	4
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Election of Candidates to the Board of Blue Shield International

Gaye, Hamady (Senegal)	22	Bae, Kidong (Republic of Korea)	18
Weschenfelder, Klaus (Germany)	18	Klupsz, Lidia (Poland)	15
Park, Tanya (Australia)	13	Wilkie, Nancy (USA)	13
Abstain (0 candidates)	0		

The founding four organisation have nominated the following representatives:

- ICA will be represented by Emilie Gagnet Leumas, Chair of the ICA Expert Group on Emergency Management and Disaster Preparedness
- IFLA will be represented by Gerald Leitner, IFLA's Secretary General
- ICOM will be represented by Peter Keller, ICOM's Director-General, and
- ICOMOS will be represented by Bijan Rouhani, Vice President of ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness (ICORP), and Vice-Chair of the ICOMOS Working Group for Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in Syria and Iraq.

Biographies of the new Board are available on the Blue Shield website⁷.

5. Final Address

The meeting concluded with a brief address from the new President, Peter Stone (full address in Appendix 2). He thanked everyone for attending, and particularly those non first language English speakers for speaking English, and those attending from very late or very early time zones. He thanked KH for all his work for the organisation since 2008, and EC for everything, particularly for the organisation of a smooth General Assembly. He thanked Newcastle University for all their support, and UNESCO for giving permission for a UNESCO Chair. He also thanked the General Assembly for voting for him, and hoped to be worthy over the next three years. PGS reiterated the crucial need to find longer-term funding for Blue Shield. Lastly, he thanked the outgoing Board members for all their hard work for Blue Shield, and expressed his hope to see everyone in Prague in person at the planned Extraordinary General Assembly in 2021.

⁶ <https://vote.electionrunner.com/election/f5005/results>

⁷ <https://theblueshield.org/about-us/international-committee/>

Appendix 1: Attendees

Blue Shield Board: Karl von Hapsburg (Board: President), Emilie G. Leumas (Board: ICA), Gerald Leitner (Board: IFLA), Ludovica Antonucci (Board: ICOM on behalf of Peter Keller), Bijan Rouhani (Board: ICOMOS), Peter Stone (Board: Vice-President & Elected member), Manana Tevzadze (Board: Secretary / Treasurer (Board: Elected member), Kidong Bae (Board: Elected member), Nancy Wilkie (Board: Elected member), Emma Cunliffe (Secretariat, non-voting).

Representatives of the Founding Four Organisations: Anthea Seles (Member: ICA), Gaia Jungeblodt (Member: ICOMOS), Claire McGuire (Member: IFLA), Sophie Delepierre (Member: ICOM)

Representatives of National Committees: Luciana Micha (Member: Argentina); Sue Hutley (Member: Australia), Tanya Parks (Member: Australia); Friedrich Schipper (Member: Austria), Leylya Strobl (Member: Austria), Isabelle Leroy (Member: Belgium), Christian Nana Tchuisseu (Member: Cameroun), Fernand Ateba Ossende (Member: Cameroun), Lida Pandt (Member: Curacao), Jana Souckova (Member: Czech Republic), Jiri Smitka (Member: Czech Republic), Marlene Kloster Hedegaard (Member: Denmark), Søren la Cour Jensen (Member: Denmark), Susann Harder (Member: Germany), Klaus Weschenfelder (Member: Germany), Elena Korka (Member: Greece), Samuel Franco Arce (Member: Guatemala), María Karen (Member: Iceland), Zoe Reid (Member: Ireland), Patrizia la Piscopia (Member: Ireland), Inkyung Chang (Member: Korea), Joanne Farchakh-Bajjaly (Member: Lebanon), Davorin Trpeski (Member: Macedonia), Andrea Kieskamp (Member: Netherlands), Axel Mykleby (Member: Norway), Luis Martin Bogdanovich (Member: Peru), Ricardo Rivera Velásquez (Member: Peru), Krzysztof Salacinski (Member: Poland), Lidia Klupsz (Member: Poland), Fatima Fall (Member: Senegal), Hamady Gaye (Member: Senegal), Fionnuala Rogers (Member: UK), Tom Pinfold (Member: UK), Patty Gerstenblith (Member: USCBS), Perry McGowan (Member: USCBS).

Representatives of National Committees Under Construction: Daniel Inoque (Representative: Mozambique), Kyrylo Kobtsev (Representative: Ukraine).

Each Member (one representative of a national committee or founding four organisation) was entitled to one vote. Board members are also entitled to one vote in all matters except elections. Not all members were able to be present for the whole of the General Assembly: this is reflected in the different numbers of people voting in each block.

Appendix 2: Presidential Addresses

The President, Karl von Habsburg, welcomed everyone to the online General Assembly.

Let me welcome all of you to our General Assembly here in 2020. We have a rather strange General Assembly because of course the circumstances are forcing us to have it on Zoom. You know, we had it planned in a different way and we were really trying, I think, every possibility to either postpone it or come to a better solution of finding it, but I think this is the best we can do. And please allow me in the beginning just to say very, very heartfelt word of thanks, especially to Emma, but also to Peter in preparing this General Assembly because I know it was incredibly complicated and I think also from the technological point of view, they have done the best that anybody can come up with. So I want to thank you really from all my heart, because it's. I know it's very complicated and I think we will be able to have a good General Assembly, although it might be type of a "rump" General Assembly and we will have more meetings with more content. Let me say in the beginning, after really welcoming all of you, it makes this type of General Assembly possible when we're all in different places. I'm actually personally sitting at Istanbul airport. I am on my way going to the Syrian border here in Turkey to visit the Syrian Orthodox minorities there, and I think it is just absolutely unbelievable what can be seen there from the cultural point of view, and it allows me to be here and try and guide as much as I can from the airport of Istanbul.

I would just like to say a couple of personal remarks in the beginning before we're diving right into our agenda. And I am saying these points right now because I know that there might be difficulties with the technology, and I might not be there at the right moment to say that. And that's why I would like to make a couple of personal remarks in the beginning. First of all, I want to really thank all of you for these incredible years we have behind us, and for the work you are allowing me to do, and for the progress we have been making in Blue Shield and for the changes we have been doing to Blue Shield to make it more effective and to make it broader. I really can't tell you how grateful I am and how enriching it was for me. Also personally to work with all of you at the time when I had the honour to be the President of Blue Shield - since I'm not running for office anymore, and we have only one candidate for the presidency which is Peter Stone. In this connection, I would also like to say a couple of words to him - and I hope you forgive me for saying this before - I should probably say this just before the Election for the presidency, but I'll put it right in the beginning because I think it is important to say.

I want to say that I am very grateful to Peter that he has suggested that he follows me in the position as a President. I have so many years of collaborating and working with Peter and I have seen his unbelievable diligence. I have seen his knowledge in the field, his ability to communicate with everybody, his possibility to be reached whenever it's necessary. I have seen so many positive and really great traits in Peter that I can really not think of anybody better to fulfil this function, and to bring Blue Shield to an absolute new level, which I'm sure he will do with the support that he has been bringing through

his work, that he has been doing with Newcastle University, the UNESCO Chair, and all the types of work that have been going into that. I have to say I am very grateful and I absolutely, wholeheartedly, and with all conviction am supporting his running for the presidency. This is not an election campaign that I'm running here: since he's the only candidate, I assume he will be elected. But I really want to say how much I am appreciating the fact that Peter is taking on the battle, and is running with it and will definitely carry on Blue Shield and bring Blue Shield to a new level. As a personal point before we go into the agenda directly, let me also say how grateful I am that I was able to do this work, and in particular that I was able to introduce the collaboration with all the "blue light" organizations, especially the military, in a much stronger way to help in the training programs that have been developed. The collaboration with UN institutions in all these types of ways was enriching.

I of course will very happily also be available in the future, although I don't have a function anymore. Wherever I can help, I'll be totally happy to do it. I promise this also to Peter - and of course Blue Shield has always been and is something which is extremely close to my heart, so I'll definitely stay there - whatever I can do. And if you think I can help in some way, I'd be delighted to be there and help with that. And I just wanted to mention this right at the beginning, since I will have no more function afterwards.

Before handing over to Peter, let me just say one thing which kind of relates to an experience we had three weeks ago - this absolutely incredible catastrophe in Beirut. We had this explosion like none of us living on this planet has possibly seen before, and I had the possibility to go to Beirut and visit the situation first-hand. I am very, very grateful to Blue Shield and the other organizations in Beirut, and of course to Joanne [Farchakh-Bajjal, of Lebanese National Committee of the Blue Shield], and to everybody else involved there to prepare the work, they are doing absolutely incredible work. For me, being in Beirut showed to me absolutely the importance and exactly the role that Blue Shield can play in a catastrophe like this. I mean, we have been working (probably you have seen it on the website) on a damage assessment platform, in which a lot of volunteers are putting the damage where we can see the progress of the work that is done on those cultural sites that are damaged. It is a comprehensive platform which will give us a great report at the end, and we can see the role of Blue Shield being right there after something catastrophic is happening, but also with an exit plan of being out and thinking about the time when other organisations might be taking over.

I think there is something when we look at what happened in Beirut. We have a great role model for the future. I am sorry for seeing something positive in that catastrophe which has happened there, but I think it is an incredible learning process that we can do in Blue Shield, for all the Blue Shield to collaborate in this. Also, Peter has been incredibly active in preparing everything that is being done in Beirut currently through Blue Shield, so I'm very grateful for that. I see something positive in it and I see a possibility to learn coming out of it. The role of Blue Shield and the necessity of Blue Shield activities has

hardly ever been seen with such importance and in such a clear way as we have seen in just in the last couple of weeks in Beirut.

And with that, I think I will hand over to Peter and ask him to explain the proceeding of our agenda.

The General Assembly closed with an address from the new President, PGS.

Just a few very quick points. Firstly, thank you to everybody who has attended the General Assembly and thank you to all of those non first language English speakers for speaking English as ever. Thank you also to those of you who got up in the middle of the night or have stayed up or got up very early. Thank you for that. Even though he now won't hear it, I want to say thank you very much to Karl Hapsburg, who has been driving a lot of Blue Shield from at least 2008, and he's done an enormous amount of work on our behalf, and I hope we won't let him go, and I hope he will be able to carry out some additional work. Thank you to Emma for everything, but especially for making this General Assembly work so smoothly as I've said already. Thank you very much to Newcastle University for everything they've done to enable Blue Shield to get to where it is. But as I say, we can't rely on that going on too much into the future. We simply don't know. Thank you also to UNESCO for giving Newcastle the permission to establish a UNESCO Chair, because from that comes all of this. Thank you also to all of you for your confidence in me, I hope I can repay that confidence and I don't let you down over the next three years. I now go back to the earlier voting. Two people didn't vote for the new strategic plan. If there was a reason for that then please feel free to email me directly. And if you've got any comments on it as it stands, or if you think there should be something added to it, please let me know and we can adjust it: we need to hear your views just as much as you need to hear what we are aspiring to do. We need to get the new board together. We need to outline my ideas - which coincide a lot with that strategic plan. Obviously, we need to build on and add to that strategic plan, and we need to develop other partnerships. But most crucially we need to find the money for that central small unit. So thank you very much, one and all, and I suppose as your new President, I'm allowed to say thank you and goodbye and that's the close of the 2020 General Assembly and I hope to see you all in the flesh in Prague next September.

Lastly, thank you to those board members who either didn't stand for election or weren't re-elected at this point. Thank you all very much for all of your hard work.

Thank you again to everybody, thank you one and all.