

OCEANIA WOMEN'S FORUM TAHITI, 6TH JULY 2008

Tahiti, land of blue seas and abundance.



Tahiti, also the venue for the Oceania Women's Forum which was held on the 6th of July 2008. Participation was not very high (30 participants) but as the President of the Oceania table tennis Federation, Patrick Gillmann said in his closing speech, it's not the quantity but the quality that counts. And the quality was excellent. Proceedings began with Hinari Ng Kwai Susi, President of the Federal Youth Commission of Tahiti who welcomed the participants, followed by Anolyn Lulu, Oceania representative on the ITTF Women's Working Group who made a progress report of the situation in Vanuatu. Patrick Gillmann, President of the Oceania Table Tennis Federation, set the tone for the forum by clearly stating what he expected from the forum – a work plan for the future to increase female participation in table tennis in Oceania, in particular the island states. Alice Bremond, representative from the Ministry in charge of Women's Affairs and Nancy Tehei, General Secretary of the Tahitian NOC, made inspiring speeches about the situation of women and sport in French Polynesia and the enormous challenges still facing women in the region – lack of funds, lack of infrastructure, violence against women and the seemingly insurmountable social and cultural barriers that prevent women from participating in sport and acceding to high positions in the sport world.



Nancy Tehei

Sandra Levy-Agami

They were followed by Susie Yee from Fiji, Oceania representative on the IWG, who spoke about the role Melanesian Women could play in the women and sport movement and Rosaline Blake from the Cook Islands who had entitled her talk "The empowerment of women leaders in decision-making roles". There were other Tahitian speakers such as Dr. Maire Tuhejava, a nutritionist and Sandra Levy-Agami, a member of the Tahitian Parliament and Deputy President of the Board of Polynesian Women.



Rosaline Blake, Claude Bergeret, Patrick Gillmann, Susie Yee

The ITTF Project Manager, Lila de Soysa, made a comprehensive progress report on the ITTF Women's Development Programme and encouraged all present to fully participate in the efforts of the ITTF to increase women's participation at all levels of table tennis. She was followed by the Oceania Development Officer, Andrew Hubbard who made a progress report of the development work being done in Oceania. Claude Bergeret, made a report, based on the IOC survey of International Federations published after the Athens Olympic Games and encouraged all the Federations present to continue to ensure that their Federations and Continent comply with IOC criteria so that table tennis grows stronger in their part of the world and remains on the Olympic Programme. One of the criteria dear to the IOC being gender equity.

The participants of the Forum took the opportunity to ask the President of the Oceania Table Tennis Federation, Patrick Gillman, to sign the Brighton Declaration together with the representative of the Ministry in charge of Women's Affairs, Alice Bremond and the Member of Parliament, Sandra Levy-Agami.



Claude Bergeret, Sandra Levy-Agami, Alice Bremond, Patrick Gillmann

The lunch break was followed by two groups working on the following subjects: "Can women play table tennis in the face of cultural barriers?" "Equity between men & Women in table tennis – Is there room for improvement?" The reporters summarised the discussions and the **Oceania Challenge** (see attachment) was born.

A heartfelt thank you to the Tahiti Table Tennis Federation and the Oceania Table Tennis Federation for organising the forum. Thank you to all the participants and speakers who made it a success.