



EUROPE

12/06/2023 - 14:00-17:00 (CEST) Annual General Meeting (Wittisheim, France)

Present: Salome Triebe and Nikolaos Prountzos (ANYFION), Basu Dev Tiwari (Nepalaya), Manfred Winkler (GLOBO), Jette Ladiges (El Puente), Sophie Tack (Oxfam Magasins du Monde), Giovanni Gerola (EFTA), Verena Albert (GEPA), Ilse Pijnenburg (Seepje), Karin und Juergen Herold (Fair Band), Alex Gareiss and Sandrine Pierson (Bouga CacaO), Tadeusz Makulski (Polish Fair Trade Association), Juanjo Martínez (Oxfam Intermon), Gérald Godreuil (Fédération Artisans du Monde), Alessandro Franceschini (Altromercato), Cassandre Maury (Les Jardin de Gaia), Gaga Pignatelli (Equo Garantito), Poul Roed Kristensen (U-landsforeningen svalerne), Martin Rhodes (Scottish Fair Trade Forum), Julian Fellner (EZA Fairer Handel), Christa Bierbaum (Zotter), Lilian Schibli and Lara Baranzini (Magasins du Monde Roman), Fredrik Kondrup (IndoNaturals), Caterina Occhio (SeeMe), France Villeneuve (Shared Interest), Philipp Scheidiger (Swiss Fair Trade), Mikkel Kofod Nørgård, Fabian Richter and Viola Carboni (WFTO-Europe)

Chair: Mikkel Kofod Nørgård

Quorum: Out of 70 registered members, 36 were present or represented (including 13 by proxy) meaning the quorum obligation was met.

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductory words by the President and other Board members;
2. Appointment of the Chair and Secretary;
3. Appointment of the Voting Committee and confirmation of the quorum;
4. Approval of the Minutes from the 2022 AGM in Brussels, Belgium;
5. Presentation of 2022 Accounts and Balance;
6. Approval of 2022 Accounts and Balance; Discharge of the Board of Directors;
7. Presentation of the Budget 2023 and 2024 Provisional Budget (incl. fee for 2023, 2024);
8. Approval of the 2023 Provisional Budget (incl. fees for 2022);
9. Presentation of the Annual Report 2022/23 and work plan for 2022;
10. Presentation Interim Strategic Plan 2023-2025 + Q&A (***moved to item 12***)
11. Approval of Interim Strategic Plan 2023-2025 (***moved to item 13***)
12. Presentation of status on criteria on Northern Producers (***moved to item 14***)
13. Updates from WFTO Global (***moved to item 15***)
14. New candidates to the board of Directors + Q&A (***moved to item 10***)
15. Nomination of the new Directors of the Board (secret ballot) (***moved to item 11***)
16. Any Other Business (AOB).

1. Welcome and introductory words by the President and other Board members;

The President of the Board, Juanjo Martínez welcomed all and thanked in particular those present physically at the conference.

2. Appointment of the Chair and Secretary;

In order to keep every vote present for meeting the quorum, the regional coordinator, Mikkel Kofod Nørgård, was proposed as chair and communication assistant, Viola Carboni, proposed as secretary. Approved unanimously.

3. Appointment of the Voting Committee and confirmation of the quorum;

Similarly, in order to keep the quorum, Project & Advocacy Officer, Fabian Richter was proposed for the voting committee, together with Salomé Triebe and Nikolaos Prountzos (representing the provisional member Anyfion). Approved unanimously.

4. Approval of the Minutes from the 2022 AGM (online);

One comment to the minutes was raised in the form of a question: In the 2022 AGM it was discussed that WFTO Global would take over € 10,000 of fees for the FTAO from WFTO-Europe. The coordinator clarified that this was, at the time, a proposal, sent to the Global Board on behalf of the European Board, to permanently rebalance these fees internally between WFTO Global and Europe to be better in line with their respective budget. The Global Board in the end accepted taking over € 6,000 and only for the year of 2022. In 2023, Global's budget is already stretched to its limit, but it was agreed that if more funds would become available then Global would again take over a larger part of the fees in 2023. Meanwhile, the original proposal would be re-discussed by the Global Board with the possibility of rebalancing the fees from 2024 instead.

Sofie Tack, the European representative on the Global Board and on the Board of the FTAO clarified that WFTO as a family pays € 31,000 every year to the FTAO with a commitment lasting until 2026. The division between Global and Europe is internal, but from the beginning Global has been paying approx. € 15,000 and Europe approx. € 16,000. This division could be changed internally, but the total should be kept the same.

It was further mentioned that WFTO Global is setting up a working group on advocacy to engage more actively with the FTAO.

This clarified all comments and the minutes were approved with 33 in favour and 3 abstentions.

5. Presentation of 2022 Accounts and Balance;

The Coordinator presented 2022 Accounts and Balance. Income from membership fees was higher than expected, as was income from projects. The latter was due to parts of the income from certain projects related to the financial year of 2022, though those parts were originally expected to relate to 2023.

Regarding expenses, HR increased in 2022, mainly due to the addition of Fabian Richter to the team as Project & Advocacy Officer on part-time basis from late November. The expenses for this position are, however, covered by a Belgian government fund for employment, Fonds

Maribel. Office costs did not rise and for the rest, mainly costs for publication & studies as well as per diems and travel were significantly higher than the original, provisional budget, but these costs were linked to - and almost completely covered by - projects.

The result of 2022 was a significant surplus, but since part of this came from income originally expected in 2023, it was pointed out that this could mean a deficit for the result of 2023.

6. Approval of 2022 Accounts and Balance; Discharge of the Board of Directors;

The results of 2022 were approved with 31 in favour and 5 abstentions. The Board was discharged.

7. Presentation of the Budget 2023 and 2024 Provisional Budget (incl. fee for 2023, 2024);

The coordinator presented the updated forecast for income and expenses for 2023. There was an expected increase in membership fees, despite some members withdrawing or going out of business in recent months. This is due to increased turnover of a number of members who have moved into the highest bracket for regional membership fees. On income from projects/funds, the stated figure is a target with only part of it achieved at the time of the AGM. Still around € 20,000 would be needed in additional income/fundraising to balance the budget with foreseen expenses. HR costs for the coordinator's position will be lower than for 2022 due to lower tax/social security obligations on the side of the organisation when the coordinator works remotely from Denmark.

Other points to note were that office rent has increased due to inflation, and the costs for the Biennial Conference were not completely covered by the participation fees (not enough members joined to reach break even). The coordinator mentioned, however, that he sees it as part of the organisation's purpose to bring members together for physical exchanges and discussions, and core budget spent on this should thus be justified.

Then, the coordinator strongly urged that any extra income acquired in 2023 should be allocated to increasing the Project & Advocacy Officer position to full-time - the office needs the extra capacity and the current situation is also unsustainable for Fabian Richter who currently holds the position.

The Provisional Budget for 2024 was then presented. It is similar to the budget of 2023, with an indexation for HR costs and a possible small increase on travel budget (mainly for participation in the Biennial Conference of WFTO Global in South Africa). Again, a target for fundraising was included to balance the budget.

Alex from Bouga Cacao raised a point about membership fees related to the resolution put forward during the extraordinary GM in Berlin in August of 2022: In his view, membership fees are eschewed with smaller members bearing a disproportionate burden compared with larger members (the highest threshold begins at turnover of € 1,000,000+ so, in the example of Alex, a member with € 1,000,000 in turnover and one with € 10,000,000 pay the same fee). As no concrete resolution was put forward for this AGM, he urged that further discussion on the

structure of the membership fees should take place and encouraged all to re-read the resolution from 2022 (which contains a concrete proposal), which was, however, rejected by vote at the given GM.

The coordinator highlighted that for 2024 at least an indexation of the membership fees is proposed, so the budget of 2024 could look different in the end. It is a provisional budget either way and the amount for fees can go both up (if new members join) or down (if members withdraw or go out of business).

Sophie Tack raised three points in comment to the point of Alex Garveiss:

- She is in favour of indexation, but reminds all that the European fee cannot be viewed separately from the global fee.
- Now it is not the moment to increase the fee. It is necessary to take into account the economic situation before changing the membership fee.
- She prefers to start a more fundamental discussion: How do we imagine the future of regions in WFTO? We should broaden the discussion.

Alex agrees on broadening the discussion but counters that the problem of unfair distribution for smaller members remains.

Membership fees for 2023 were presented. The Board proposed that no changes be made to these fees, since any changes would mean that members who had already paid would have to pay again (the final part) within the same year.

Since the Board wanted to propose an indexation to the fees for 2024, it simultaneously proposed to introduce the practice of voting on the membership fees of the coming year, instead of only the ones of the current year. The proposal to introduce this practice was first put to a vote after which the proposed fees for 2024 (with an indexation) was put to a vote.

As fees had not been indexed nor changes since 2015 (as is stated on the Membership Fees document prepared for the AGM) and considering the recent, extremely high inflation, the Board proposed to index the fees of 2024 by the core inflation of Belgium of January 2023 (approx. 8.5%).

Giovanni Gerola from EFTA took the floor to argue that it was illogical to index fees simply because Belgium has automatic indexation of salaries as probably the only country in Europe. Instead he proposed to make up for the higher costs through efficiencies elsewhere in the budget. The coordinator explained that it is the reality of the organisation that salaries (and other costs, especially rent) are indexed automatically in Belgium, and efficiencies like moving to a shared office (e.g. with the FTAO) had already been looked into and discussed - at this point no savings were likely to be made from such an effort but other possibilities were still being explored. Apart from that, all other parts of the budget were already quite limited and further savings were hard to imagine.

Jette Ladiges from El Punte raised the point that the possibility of merging the European office with Global should be discussed - the coordinator (of WFTO-Europe) could be put on the payroll

of WFTO Global (as was the previous coordinator of WFTO-LA, Zulma Brites), which would likely lower the costs and the workload of maintaining a physical and legal presence in Brussels. The coordinator agreed to initiate this discussion with Global and the European membership in due course.

8. Approval of the 2024 Provisional budget (incl. fees 2023 + 2024)

2024 Budget Proposal was approved with 31 votes in favour and 5 abstentions.

Membership fees 2023 were approved with 34 in favour and 2 abstention.

The proposal of voting on the membership fees of the following year (instead of current year) was approved by 35 in favour and 1 abstention.

The proposed 2024 membership fees including indexation were approved with 1 against, 33 in favour and 2 abstentions.

9. Presentation of the Annual Report 2022/23 and work plan for 2022

The AGM had already been delayed and lengthy discussions under previous agenda items meant this item was proposed to be skipped in order to have sufficient time for discussion on the items that required voting - in particular the Interim Strategic Plan 2023-2025 (item 12).

10. New candidates to the board of Directors + Q&A

For the current AGM, no application for the Board had been received, so this item was moved up the agenda in order to cover it quickly and move on to other items. The president, Juanjo, welcomed everyone to candidate themselves to be on the board and brought to everyone's attention that Jean-Christophe Galland had stepped down from the Board since he stopped working at Malongo in May of 2023. Additionally, the first mandate of Charlotte Beacon (Transform Trade - formerly, Traidcraft Exchange) had come to an end and she would not stand for re-election due to difficulties with finding time for Board duties.

The coordinator showed the overview of the board, explaining that with 5 Board members, the Board would be too small according to the Bylaws, but large enough according to the Constitution (which has authority in case of conflict with the Bylaws) - so no issues would arise from the Board members stepping down. The only remaining point was whether Cassandre Maury of Les Jardins de Gaïa would stand for re-election, as her first mandate had come to an end. She decided not to stand for re-election for the same reasons as Charlotte. The coordinator, the Board and the membership thanked her profoundly for her service and for making it possible to host the Biennial Conference at Les Jardins de Gaïa in Wittisheim.

11. Nomination of the new Directors of the Board (secret ballot)

As no candidatures had been received, no nominations took place.

Once again, members were encouraged to candidate for the Board - currently represented countries are Spain, France, UK, Italy and the Netherlands, so the Board would in particular

welcome candidates from Eastern and/or Nordic European countries and/or candidates representing worldshops. It was pointed out that the Board can co-opt new Board members in between AGMs, but that such co-opted members should be confirmed by vote at the following AGM. So candidatures at any time were still highly welcome and encouraged.

12. Presentation Interim Strategic Plan 2023-2025 + Q&A

The Board had proposed an Interim Strategic Plan for 2023-2025 to cover the years until WFTO Global would adopt their new Strategic Plan (foreseen to be in 2024). This was also the reason why the proposed Strategic Plan is an “interim” one. Ilse Pijnenburg (Seepje) from the Board presented the proposal, explaining that many objectives and actions are quite close to the previous strategic plan. The aim is to wait for Global’s strategy in order to align the next Strategic Plan of WFTO-Europe with that. The main change proposed was to have measurable objectives within the strategy following the “Objectives-Key Results” format (or OKR). Ilse explained how these worked with concrete Objectives with a number of measurable Key Results by which progress could be tracked.

The president, Juanjo, pointed out again that this is a transitional period for WFTO-Europe but for this reason it is very important - once again he encouraged members to candidate to the Board to help steer the organisation in this important period.

Ilse pointed out that the Board in the end considered the proposed number of objectives and key results to be too many for the current capacity of the office. The coordinator added to this by explaining which objectives and key results were proposed to be cut - and that remaining objectives and key results had been organised by descending order of priority (the lowest objectives and the key results farthest to the right in the document would be given lower priority).

Gerard Godreuil (Artisans du Monde) commented to inform all about the group on sharing experiences and information regarding worldshops to help each other overcome shared challenges. Already two meetings have taken place and he urged to keep at least two meetings per year on this topic and have a place to share information around worldshops. The request to have collective meetings (like the recent town hall organised by Global) two times a year for sharing and discussing updates from Global and the regions was repeated.

Tadeusz Makulski (PFTA) requested that the secretariat re-share the report on worldshops done in 2018 and to do a new, updated report collecting similar data. The coordinator agreed to discuss data collection with Global also on other types of data (e.g. sales) and to look into the possibility of re-doing the study on worldshops.

13. Approval of Interim Strategic Plan 2023-2025 (16:43)

The updated Interim Strategic Plan 2023-2025 with the excessive objectives and key results removed was approved with 26 in favour and 10 abstentions. The coordinator would make sure to circulate the final version to members in the follow-up to the AGM.

14. Presentation of status on criteria on Northern Producers

A proposal was made to the GS and Monitoring team, with a comprehensive list of criteria. The Global Monitoring Team (the staff at Global that carries out monitoring and verification according to the GS) had however objected to the proposal, stating that it seemed too complex and difficult to utilise. The coordinator and the WFTO-Europe Board has since been trying to discuss further with them in order to work out a compromise, since several European members continued to raise issues with the current criteria for Northern Producers being too vague and so too difficult to utilise in their work and IMS, for example. It was pointed out that any actual changes to the criteria for Northern Producers in the GS would require a vote on the Global Board and eventually a vote at the General Assembly of the global membership. WFTO Global had informed that they are in the meantime working on pilots especially with farmers in Europe in order to further test how the current criteria for Northern Producers work in practice. The discussion had advanced during the workshop earlier in the day and members were invited to join the working group that originally worked on the criteria proposed to the Global Monitoring Team - it seemed that the topics of social impact and defining marginalisation would be in focus in further discussions of the group to reach a workable solution for monitoring Northern Producers in the GS and the IMS of members.

15. Updates from Global

Leida Rijnhout, CE of WFTO Global was not able to join the AGM because of illness. But there was already a request from members to have more updates from Global, which the coordinator had previously shared with Leida. The coordinator committed to reiterating this request to Leida.

16. Any Other Business (AOB).

Philipp Scheidiger (SWISS Fair Trade) took the floor to encourage all to join the International Fair Trade Towns Conference in Glarus Nord, Switzerland, in September.

A Board member of Equo Garantito took the floor to inform all that Equo Garantito had shared an open letter summarising their worries on the GS Review and she invited everyone to read it. This had been shared with all members joining the Biennial Conference and it had been included in the workshop on the GS Review that same morning.

The coordinator again apologised for not having had time to present the activities of 2022 and the work plan of 2023, but reminded all that direct questions on the work, on the workplan and previous activities are always welcome - as are questions of any sort from the membership.

With this the meeting was adjourned.

END