



## **EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL WORLD ASSEMBLY VALDOCCO, TURIN 2 – 6 OCTOBER 2024**

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Dear members of the World Confederation,

#### **Introduction**

As we gather here in Valdocco, Turin, for this Extraordinary General World Assembly, it is essential to reflect on the significant journey we have undertaken since our last Assembly. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the previous General Assembly was held online, marking a historic moment for our organization. It was a turning point where digitalization became an essential tool, enabling us to remain connected and continue our work in unprecedented times.

This shift towards digitalization has proven to be more than just a temporary solution. It has transformed how we communicate and engage with one another globally, further facilitating our role as a world organization. The challenge before us now is to embrace this change as an opportunity: to grow closer, to journey together, and to expand our vision of a more connected and unified World Confederation.

#### **Strategic Plan**

On 24th June 2022, we launched our Strategic Plan for the 2021-2024 term. This plan is the fruit of extensive consultation with our National and Provincial Federations. We sought feedback and input, striving to create a strategy that reflects the needs and aspirations of all our members. However, it has become clear that we must do more to improve participation. Our goal is not only to hear from the Federations but to actively listen and engage in meaningful dialogue.

The key challenge for the Confederation is to assess the impact of this Strategic Plan. Are we meeting our objectives? Are we fostering greater engagement and collaboration? These are the questions we must answer as we look towards the future.

#### **Call for Communications Counsellor and GEX Counsellor for Africa**

In the aftermath of our online Assembly, we identified the need to complete the Presidency team by appointing two key roles: a Communications Counsellor and a GEX

*“We all belong to Don Bosco” Carlo Gastini*

Counsellor for Africa. Following a call for nominations, two new members were co-opted into the Presidency. Their contributions have already begun to strengthen our team and enhance our efforts to connect with the broader community.

### **Regional Meetings**

Over the past year, we have held a series of Regional Meetings, continuing our mission to connect and engage with Federations worldwide:

- The first Regional Meeting took place in May 2023 in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam.
- The second, for the Europe and Middle East Region, was held in Turin, Italy, in June 2023.
- The third meeting, focused on the Americas Region, convened in Cordoba, Argentina, in October 2023.
- Africa hosted two Regional Online Meetings in 2022 and 2023.

These meetings provided crucial opportunities to listen to the concerns and aspirations of our regions and work collaboratively towards shared goals.

### **World Confederation Calendar of Activities**

Since the beginning of our mandate, we have maintained a comprehensive calendar of activities, ensuring we stay on track with our goals and commitments. This calendar reflects the diverse range of initiatives we have undertaken and serves as a blueprint for future activities.

### **Membership Growth**

In less than three years, we have made significant progress in expanding our reach and connecting with new National and Provincial Federations. Our increased focus on communication, especially through social media, has been instrumental in this achievement. Today, we are proud to be in contact with over 60 National Federations, many of whom are now full voting members.

Our goal is to continue growing this network, bringing more Federations into the fold, and supporting them as they organize at national, provincial, and local levels. By the next Assembly, we hope to see even more Federations become full members of the Confederation.

### **Presidency and Executive Council Meetings**

Since our last Assembly, we have held 11 Presidency meetings and 14 Executive Council meetings. This increase in frequency reflects the growing commitment and responsibility of our leadership teams. These meetings have been essential in planning, sharing, and disseminating our work, ensuring that we remain focused on our mission and vision.

## Communications

Our communications efforts have been robust and multi-faceted. We have launched and maintained various platforms to keep our members informed and engaged, including:

- A redesigned website
- An active Facebook Page
- The Exallievi Newsflash
- A Monthly Letter to all Federations
- A new YouTube Channel

These channels have proven vital in ensuring that our members are connected, informed, and able to participate actively in the life of the Confederation.

## Solidarity with Ukraine: A Global Appeal for Refugee Support

In response to the humanitarian crisis brought about by the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022, the World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco launched an urgent appeal for donations. Our goal was to provide immediate aid to the countless refugees who were forced to flee their homes, seeking safety and shelter in neighbouring countries. This initiative quickly gained momentum, with various National Federations uniting to contribute to this vital cause, demonstrating our shared commitment to solidarity and support for those in need.

Thanks to the Salesian Provinces in Poland and Slovakia, we were able to channel these donations effectively. The Salesian Houses in these provinces played a crucial role in delivering on-the-ground assistance, offering refugees shelter, food, and emotional support during a time of immense hardship.

A particularly significant initiative was the organization of a summer camp in Malta for orphaned children from Ukraine. These children, previously under the care of Salesians in Ukraine, had found temporary refuge in Slovakia after fleeing the war. The summer camp, organized in collaboration with the National Federation of Slovakia, provided these children with a much-needed opportunity to experience joy, healing, and a sense of normalcy in the midst of the ongoing conflict.

This collective effort stands as a testament to the power of global solidarity. Through the combined support of our members, National Federations, and Salesian partners, we were able to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those affected by the war in Ukraine. The initiative reflects our commitment to living the values of Don Bosco by reaching out to those in need, especially the young and vulnerable.

## Other Special Initiatives

### *Carlo Gastini Monument*

One of the significant milestones of our term has been the development of the Carlo Gastini Monument, a tribute to the founder of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco. This project not only honors our past but serves as a beacon for future generations of Past Pupils.

*“We all belong to Don Bosco” Carlo Gastini*

### *Regional Meetings with Salesian Family Delegates*

We have also strengthened our ties with the Salesian Family through regular Regional Meetings with their delegates, fostering a closer relationship and mutual support.

### *Akash Bashir Cause of Beatification*

The cause for the beatification of Akash Bashir, a Past Pupil who gave his life protecting his faith, has become a focal point for the spiritual dimension of our work. His story resonates deeply with our values of courage, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment to our faith.

### **GEX - The Importance of Young People in Our Organization**

As President, I am incredibly proud of the four members of our Presidency team who represent the young people, or GEX, in our organization. Their commitment and enthusiasm are evident, and they serve as a beacon of hope for the future of our movement. However, I feel it is necessary to share a word of caution: we must do more to create spaces and opportunities for young people to actively participate and take on leadership roles within our organization.

In some parts of the world, our Federations are not offering the space or opportunities that our young members deserve. It's too easy to complain about a supposed lack of interest from young people, but this attitude only serves to widen the generation gap. Instead of pointing fingers, we must take a synodal approach—journeying together, listening to one another, and creating pathways for young people to take on leadership positions. By doing so, we can narrow the gap and make our organization truly inclusive.

Our challenge is clear: we must change. We cannot hold on to old structures of power or honour that may have worked in the past. Leadership in our organization should not be about control, but about service—especially service to the young. If we fail to adapt, we risk becoming irrelevant in today's world. We need to focus on the present, to renew our mission, which is the education and care of young people, particularly those who are most in need.

My key question to every Federation is this: What is your mission with the young? What social and educational activities are you offering to young people, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalized? This is not a rhetorical question—it is a crucial question for every level of governance in our organization. Our *raison d'être* remains centered on young people. How can we lead effectively if we don't have their active presence in leadership?

We need to ensure that our doors are open wide to every generation. We must foster an environment where young people feel not only welcome but essential to the growth and future of our organization. It is through their active participation and leadership that we will continue to thrive.

*“We all belong to Don Bosco” Carlo Gastini*

## A Word of Gratitude

None of our efforts would have been possible without the unwavering support and dedication of many individuals and groups who have worked tirelessly alongside us. I would like to take a moment to express heartfelt gratitude to those who have been instrumental in supporting our cause over the past three years.

First and foremost, we are deeply thankful to Cardinal Rector Major Ángel Fernández Artime and his successor Don Stefano Martoglio for their exemplary leadership of the Salesian Congregation. Their guidance has been a source of inspiration for our mission.

A special mention goes to Fr. Joan Lluís Playa SDB, Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family, and Bro. Dominic Nam SDB, World Delegate for the Past Pupils, whose counsel and collaboration have been invaluable throughout our journey.

I also extend sincere thanks to the Presidency Team, the Provincials and Delegates of the Salesian Family from various provinces, whose contributions have greatly enhanced our work. Additionally, I am grateful to the Federations of numerous countries and provinces for their solidarity and active participation, as we have walked this path together, united in our shared mission.

Each of these individuals and groups has played a vital role in the progress we have made, and we owe much of our success to their continued support and commitment.

## Way Forward

Looking ahead, the Strategic Plan and the resolutions from this Extraordinary General World Assembly will guide our efforts for the next three years. The amendments to our Statute will provide us with the flexibility needed to make further necessary changes, enabling us to adapt and grow as an organization.

As we continue our journey, synodality will serve as our guiding principle in leadership—fostering unity, collaboration, and shared responsibility across all levels of our organization.

Furthermore, we will pursue the development of online archives and the establishment of the Carlo Gastini Foundation, ensuring that our history is preserved and that future generations can continue to draw inspiration from our roots.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the trust you have placed in me as President of this great Confederation. Together, we will continue to grow, to serve, and to make a lasting impact on the world. Let us go forward with renewed energy and commitment, confident in our mission and united in our vision.



Bryan Magro  
President of the World Confederation of Past Pupils of Don Bosco