

Geneva, 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2007

To: National Scout Organizations, Partners and Friends of Scouting

Dear Sister and Brother Scouts and Friends,

I wish to share with all the National Scout Organizations (NSOs), as well as partner organizations and friends of scouts, some initial thoughts about the events that recently shook the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM). I hope that sharing these thoughts in this way will allow for the recognition of the deceit that was aimed at discrediting the work of the constitutionally appointed World Scout Committee and the Secretary General. The deceitful words and actions were launched in an attempt to hide the responsibilities of those persons who occupy prominent leadership positions in Scout organizations, and who used their position to actively participate in destabilizing the entire Scout Movement.

As all NSOs were informed in circular N.34/2007 (the relevant sentences are quoted below), I fully assumed my institutional responsibility and despite the coup that was raised against WOSM I did not resign, as was demanded by the organisers of the coup.

With calm firmness I defended the principles and the unity of the Scout Movement, which I consider to be the very first mission of the World Scout Committee and of the Secretary General.

The facts of this matter are known. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, without any warning or reason, the current national leaders of the Boys Scouts of America (BSA) informed the World Scout Committee of their "*irrevocable decision*" to suspend the payments of their annual fee and of any other contribution to the World Scout Bureau including its regional offices "*until the current Secretary General is replaced*". With a suspiciously simultaneous action, the Swedish Scouts and the chairman of the Board of the World Scout Foundation did the same, influencing other National Scout Organisations (NSOs) to follow them.

The attack was consciously and premeditatedly launched at the beginning of the financial year of WOSM (October to September), when the World Scout Bureau (WSB) operates solely on the basis of those principal sources (the registration fees of other NSOs normally start to flow in around January). As a consequence, the payment of the WSB's November salaries for the central and regional offices personnel was already at risk.

The participants in the coup did not leave any alternatives to the World Scout Committee but to surrender to their demands and dismiss the Secretary General. The reactions of many other NSOs who remain loyal to the democratic principles of the Movement were of no consequence. Those NSOs had requested to the World Scout Committee to delay any decision without first allowing an open and fully informed debate on the issue. The grandchildren of

the Founder of our Movement, Baden-Powell, also wrote a dramatic appeal to the World Scout Committee to prevent that insane decision, but their effort was in vain.

In an extraordinary meeting in Cairo on November 12<sup>th</sup>, the World Scout Committee decided: *"...with deep regret and taking into account the decision of Eduardo Missoni not to resign, to negotiate with him his departure as Secretary General"*. This included immediate transfer of executive power, and external representative functions from 30 November 2007.

Nevertheless, in the statement announcing the dismissal of the Secretary General, the WSC *"deplored in the strongest terms the unilateral actions and demands that have been made by BSA and the Swedish Guide and Scout Council requesting the resignation of the Secretary General which have placed the future of the World Organization in jeopardy"*. The WSC also implicitly admitted that there were no valid motivations for the dismissal other than economic coercion. In fact, the statement further reads: *"Eduardo Missoni is a devoted Scout who has committed himself fully to WOSM in his role as Secretary General and has enjoyed the solid support of the WSC during his tenure"*.

The action aimed at sacking the Secretary General had been planned since long before, including the occasion of the recent World Scout Jamboree. While 40,000 Scouts were renewing their Promise and their commitment to the Scout values, a few were plotting to subvert WOSM and force the Scout Movement into its deepest crisis since its foundation.

The same subversive persons met in Patthaya, Thailand, at the beginning of October to orchestrate the combined attack that they launched a few days later. First they wrote an "open letter"—a formula never seen before in WOSM—presenting in a vague or outright erroneous manner some concerns related to financial decisions of the World Scout Committee. As a result of the active campaign developed in the lobbies of the Asia-Pacific Scout Conference (October 18-23) by the initiators of the "Patthaya group", a few other NSOs added their names to the "open letter". They were completely unaware, however, that their adhesion to that group would be used to reinforce the subversive aim, as I learned from some of the leaders of those NSOs when they confirmed their support of the Secretary General.

As a component of their premeditated coup, many of the "concerns" that were cited by the current leaders of the BSA and of the Swedish NSO were used as mere pretexts to justify their illicit action against WOSM, where they suspended payments and then pointed for the head of the Secretary General.

It was also very unfortunate that the Chairman of the World Scout Committee ultimately did not send out the Committee's answer to the "open letter" that he announced on October 18<sup>th</sup> and that was prepared as soon as the "open letter" was received. The Committee's response clarified, one-by-one, each of the concerns posed by the BSA and WSF letters. Every World Scout Committee

member but one approved the response to be distributed. Some of them insisted with the Chairman to do so immediately in order to stop the confusion, yet he did not send it. Why not? What caused the Chairman to act against the will of the Committee?

Against the majority of the World Scout Committee, the Chairman took heed to the pressure of a single dissenting member of the Committee who did not want to send that answer. It was the same Committee member that in his capacity of International Commissioner of the BSA had signed the letter requesting the replacement of the Secretary General. Serving as a World Scout Committee member but representing the interests of BSA was not only an open violation of WOSM's Constitution (art. XII, 1), but also a failure to implement the Scout Promise and Scout Law that is expected of all Scouts and their leaders in the Movement.

It is probable that the coup would not have achieved its objective without the complicity of the chairman of the Board of the World Scout Foundation (WSF). The Chairman also suspended at once the annual grant of the Foundation to WOSM without having consulted the Foundation's Board, so violating the rules established in the deed of that organization. In addition, the Chairman justified his move by pretending that he had some sort of "fiduciary responsibility" that allowed him to judge and even block the decisions of the World Scout Committee. The Foundation manages money collected in the name, with the systematic support of, and for the exclusive benefit of WOSM, and it was established decades ago, with the honorary chairmanship of HM the King of Sweden, specifically to defend WOSM from financial risks. This is why, besides being arbitrary, the action taken by the chairman of the WSF board is morally unacceptable.

Finally, it is also vital to restate the role of the World Scout Bureau and the Secretary General of WOSM within the operations of the Movement. According to the WOSM constitution (article XVI, 1), the World Scout Bureau (WSB) is the Secretariat of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), and its functions include the implementation of decisions taken by WOSM's governing organ (art. XVIII, 1), being the World Scout Conference (art. VII, 1), and of its executive organ, the World Scout Committee (art. XII, 1). Few, if any, of the possible justifications cited in the BSA and WSF letters could affect the Secretary General without at the same time involve the responsibility of the World Scout Committee. As the Committee indicated in WOSM Circular 34/2007 that announced the dismissal of the Secretary General, they remarked that he: *"has enjoyed the solid support of the WSC during his tenure"*.

Much more than how I am personally affected, the present situation leaves the Scout Movement facing an historical crossroad. Who governs WOSM? To what extent will WOSM be consistent with its current values in the future if we maintain the current course?

The decision taken by the World Scout Committee under the economic coercion

of a wealthy minority paves the way for the possibility that the policies and orientations of WOSM may be determined from now on by the threats of those who have strength to force their will into place. If this is accepted by the WOSM community, any future Secretary General will have no alternative but simply submit to the will of any overzealous aggressor.

BP once stated: *"We are a Movement, not an organisation. We work through 'love and legislation'."* I believe it is up to all of us to reaffirm BP's stance and avoid allowing arrogance and blatant disregard for agreed rules to become the new way of governing WOSM.

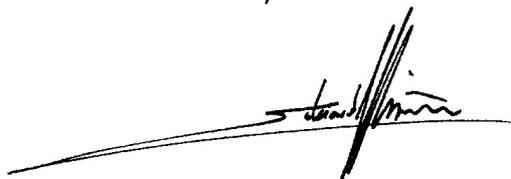
Crisis may be the perfect opportunity for change and improvement. Thus, I hereby launch an appeal to all Scouts, to their national leaders, and to all those who believe in the values of legality and democracy, to reject this situation; to open a wide debate at all levels of WOSM allowing for the full knowledge of these regrettable facts; and to put every effort into restoring the respect for Scout values and the constitutional order of the World Organization of the Scout Movement. Through this appeal we may also protect the integrity and the credibility of World Scouting, and allow our response to this unfortunate demonstration to become a memorable educational experience in world citizenship for all people in all societies.

On my side, I will continue to do my best to contribute to a Scout Movement that is loyal to the ideals of its founder; a Movement, that through the education of new generations to the values of the Scout Promise and Law, is capable of acting as a social force that contributes to building a culture of peace and of creating a better world.

Let me finally take this opportunity to whole-heartedly thank all those in Scouting, as well as those in partner organizations and institutions, those working at local, national, regional and world levels, those who dared to share their feelings joy and sadness, their projects and dreams, their frustrations and successes, their leisure and labor, and those who simply clasped my hand in a sign of sincere friendship and brotherhood. Your actions and gestures have changed my life for the better, and they will not be forgotten.

Let's hope we will have more to share together as the dialogue unfolds. We have much work to do for our Movement!

Your friend and brother Scout,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eduardo Missoni', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Eduardo Missoni

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