



## Report of the Chairman to the Annual General Meeting of the Hong Kong, China Rowing Association 16<sup>th</sup> December 2018

The year 2018 has been dominated for the Association by the commitment to and preparation for the 2019 World Rowing Coastal Championships (WRCC) and the organisation and running of the 2018 Asian Rowing Coastal Championships (ARCC) which was organised as a test event for 2019. The two events together have taken a greater portion of Association staff resources than had originally been planned or expected and some other programmes have had to be trimmed to manage these serious obligations to ARF and FISA. It was also, of course, an Asian Games year!

Notwithstanding these major events, the Association enthusiastically celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018. On 1<sup>st</sup> May we held a “Big Rowing Day” at Sha Tin, where more than 400 past and present rowers took to the water and many other past rowers returned to the Sha Tin Rowing Centre to catch up with old friends, to show their children where they used to row, to look at the photos and other displays which marked the 40 years of activities of the Association. It was a very meaningful occasion attended by VIPs including the President of SF&OC Timothy Fok and LegCo Member the Hon MA Fung Kwok. The response and the activities demonstrated the values which so many of our rowers bring to and take from our sport. Our VIP guests were impressed with the occasion and learned much about the history of the Association and the people who have participated in rowing over these many years.

The Association also took the opportunity of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to rebrand our image and our future focus – to re-energise the Association and our many activities. Our exciting and meaningful new logo was designed by Conrad PONG. A tag line, “**PASSION TO GO BEYOND**” was developed as part of the broader rebranding exercise led by Yacht Club rower Guy PARSONAGE. Our intention is that this tagline should be reflected in everything we do. It also reflects the effort of every rower in their boats on the water, striving for the perfect rowing stroke, striving for success. I hope our new logo can reflect this passion and commitment at all levels of our sport.

In the past several months, when preparation was at its height for ARCC, we might have had some doubts as to the wisdom of having committed the Association to these major events, in particular the WRCC, which we are planning as an M-Mark event (funding application will be submitted in February) with significant activation areas in Central waterfront to engage the community and raise the profile of rowing. However, I am always reminded that as a governing body of sport in Hong Kong, we should be ambitious in promoting our sport and our involvement in Asian and World Rowing. These events are our best opportunity to do so. They also give us a great opportunity to promote Hong Kong through rowing, to meet the CE’s ambition to have Victoria Harbour as a venue for international water sports and to demonstrate to government, to the Hong Kong sports community and to the community in general that rowing can be an attractive sport for all. The WRCC will stretch the Association’s resources considerably in the coming year. But I am confident that we have people with sufficient experience, enthusiasm and commitment to produce a successful event which will be very positively received by FISA, participating teams, sponsors, HKSAR Government and the community and that we can put Hong Kong on the world map for coastal rowing. We are likely to call on the support of many members during the coming 10 months. The WRCC will be held from 30<sup>th</sup> October to 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2019. Time is short.

Super Typhoon Mangkhut caused very significant damage to many water sports venues. We were fortunate that although we had a large number of boats stored outside at both centres, the excellent planning, preparing and securing of this equipment and the centres beforehand by our staff, supported and advised by HKSI coaches, meant that damage was limited. We had 11 boats damaged or destroyed and that is a relatively small number in the circumstances of such a typhoon, particularly when compared with many other water sports venues around Hong Kong.



The major damage was sustained by the Sha Tin Rowing Centre pontoon. This pontoon was already scheduled to be replaced and we had previously applied to the Sir David Trench Fund for funding. Temporary repairs were carried out quickly and the HKSAR Government has made available a special one-off fund to help NSAs with their recovery. We have applied to use this special fund to replace the STRC pontoon and expect the work to be carried out very soon.

The JCSMRC pontoon also sustained damage, although less than STRC. The members of New Star Rowing Club very generously volunteered their professional and technical expertise to carry out the necessary repairs on their own time, with the Association supplying the materials required. This work enabled all users to restart rowing activities quickly. Many other rowers and clubs helped our staff with the clean-up and recovery, demonstrating the wonderful community spirit which we have in Hong Kong rowing. I must also add that a number of Sha Tin residents also turned up to assist us in the aftermath of the storm. We are very grateful to everyone who helped in this way.

The STRC extension has not progressed. This is clearly a very important project for us. The extended and upgraded facilities which this would give us are desperately needed for expansion of our activities and attraction of new rowers. All I can say is that we have very recently re-opened discussions with the Hong Kong Jockey Club in an effort to restart the project.

Asian rowing was this year dominated by the Asian Games in Jakarta-Palembang, Indonesia, where a new rowing course hosted the rowing events. Our Hong Kong Rowing team won one silver medal and two bronze medals, with CHIU Hin Chun winning the silver medal in LM1x, LEE Ka Man winning the bronze medal in LW1x and our lightweight men's eight also winning a bronze medal. Our team also achieved two strongly fought 5<sup>th</sup> places.

Our first-ever Youth Olympic Games rower, WONG Wai Chun qualified through the Asian Qualification regatta to compete in the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina. After a mishap in his heat, WONG recovered strongly to eventually rank 13 out of 24 competitors in the JM1x.

In the 2018 Asian Junior Championships in Korea, our rowers won 1 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze medals. The gold medal was won by Junior Women's Pair of LEUNG Wing Wun and CHENG Cheuk Kwan. Additionally 5 silver and 4 bronze medals were won at the Asian Cup regattas in Singapore and Korea. All of these bodes well for our future international potential, but we cannot relax in our search for new young rowers who will be the key to rowing retaining its all-important Elite Sport status at the Hong Kong Sports Institute. In addition to international results, this status also depends on the good future governance, cohesion and management of the Association, to enable us to plan and implement sound and positive policies which are in the best interests of rowing and of our rowers.

I am pleased to congratulate all of our HKG team rowers and their coaches for their efforts and results this year, whether or not they have medals. The quality of our squads is growing and our rowers set excellent examples for athletes in Hong Kong and internationally. We now move forward to the start of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic qualification process.

The Asian Rowing Federation held its annual Congress at the time of the Asian Games and we were very pleased to congratulate HO Kim Fai on her election as Vice-President of ARF. It is important that Hong Kong can continue to play a part in ARF and FISA, to maintain our international profile, to be in a position to influence the future development of rowing regionally and internationally and also to ensure that as far as possible such pathways will continue to be available to our officials, coaches and others in future. We continue to have several members serving on ARF Committees.

Our future international results depend on our grass roots programmes to identify potential rowers and bring them into our sport. In my report last year, I highlighted the need to have a full review of the Youth Development Programme. When the Association introduced the YDP it was a leading initiative in sport



access to schools. Our current YDP is no longer sufficient to meet the expectations of today's youth and must be re-energized if it is to serve its important purpose of being the grass roots face of rowing. The past year has focussed heavily on Asian and World Coastal Championships and 2019 will be very similar. But I hope we are able to make the YDP review a high priority in the coming months.

The Association continues to support the work of the Hong Kong Water Sports Council, of which I am a Vice Chairman. The site for the long awaited Kai Tak temporary water sports centre, which will be shared by dragon boats, canoeing, life saving and rowing, now realistically looks to be approaching a conclusion. The Council is now forming a sub-group to prepare for the handover of the site, expected to be within the next 3 months, to complete the installations and to eventually manage the venue. The Association will be asked to develop new rowing programmes based at Kai Tak for the surrounding community and this will provide a significant new opportunity to spread rowing more widely in Hong Kong. The prospect of a permanent world-class water sports centre at Kai Tak is still a somewhat distant hope, but we will continue to work hard through the Hong Kong Water Sports Council to achieve this.

Our coastal rowing initiatives have focussed almost completely around preparations for the Asian and World Coastal Championships. However, we are well aware of the potential for coastal rowing to bring our sport to new venues in many areas of Hong Kong and to attract many new people to rowing. The first Tolo Harbour Coastal Regatta and several memorable events in Victoria Harbour have already demonstrated its future potential and further lead-up and legacy events will be planned to take advantage of the public profile of the world championships. The Association is also a Co-organiser with the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club of the annual Around the Island Race (ATIR), which in 2019 will be held one week after the World Championships. We hope to work together with the Yacht Club over the next several years to build the ATIR into a major world-class coastal rowing challenge and through this to build Hong Kong into a centre of Asian and World coastal rowing.

With many other activities being undertaken by the Association and its clubs, indoor rowing can sometimes be pushed to the background. But we should not lose sight of the fact that indoor rowing continues to be the first connection of many people, both young and old, to rowing. There are many ways in which indoor rowing can better serve the Association in development and membership terms and there are good examples of this in other countries around the world. There is very strong participation in the Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation Indoor Rowing Championships each year with over 100 schools and 2,000 athletes taking part. Our own Hong Kong Rowing Indoor Championships also continues to be a key event in our calendar, as does the Universities Indoor Championships. We will examine further the potential for all indoor rowers to become members of the Association and to encourage more organisations to create their own regular competitions.

Youth rowing is the future of our sport and our annual Schools Rowing Championships forms the basis of community youth rowing competition. This year around 300 school rowers competed and these numbers continue to grow. The possibility of an additional rowing base at Kai Tak will enable us to expand our exposure to new schools. Coaches will continue to be a critical resource for this programme and schools can become an important part of the much needed career structure for rowing coaches.

Para rowing is an area which still provides the Association with significant challenges. As the profile and importance of para rowing grows in Asia and around the world, it is important also for Hong Kong to find the appropriate strategies and funding to attract and retain para rowers, to both add to the options of sports available to people with disabilities in Hong Kong and at the same time to ensure that we remain a sport for all in the community.

The number of competitions organised and managed by the Association continues to grow and we need to be strategic in how these are managed. It is very clear that the Association's staff cannot support ongoing growth in this way and I hope that we can start to introduce more club or venue-organised events. This



will raise concerns as to consistency and standards, but such a model would substantially spread organisational experience and expertise throughout the rowing community and would allow the Association to concentrate more on its strategic goals without limiting the further development of events which are in the best interests of Hong Kong rowing.

Our Coaches Register shows that we currently have 104 registered coaches. A Level 2 coaching course began in early December. Coaches remain the centre of rowing development and it is important to have sufficient coaches to match our development plans, particularly as we look to expand into coastal rowing and new venues such as Kai Tak.

We have 72 registered umpires. Not all of these are active and with a very large number of events each year our active umpires are very busy. Their work and contribution to the rowing family is greatly appreciated as the foundation on which all our competitions depend. The Umpiring Commission is currently conducting workshops and examinations for new umpires.

At an Extraordinary General Meeting to be held directly after this AGM, members will be asked to vote on revised Articles of Association. These are the first revisions to our Articles for nearly 20 years and contain a number of substantial issues for the future of the Association, including setting term and age limits for Directors. These specific proposals are aimed to improve the governance of the Association in the long-term. Other changes proposed include bringing the Articles in line with the new Companies Ordinance. I would like to thank Anthony ROGERS for all the work he has done in this regard, including having the draft approved by Companies Registry and Lands Department before bringing them to members for approval.

I should also record that I will step down from my roles in FISA, the World Rowing Federation, on 31<sup>st</sup> December, having reached the FISA retirement age. I appreciate very much the opportunities the Association has given me to have this involvement in world rowing over these many years.

Thank you to our elected Directors for your very significant contributions to the management and governance of the Association. I would like to thank CHIU Tak Wing, who stepped down as a Director during the year. Tak Wing brought a great deal of experience and enthusiasm to the Board and I hope we can continue to seek his advice and reflections on a wide range of issues.

On behalf of the Association I would also like to thank the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China, the Home Affairs Bureau and the Leisure & Cultural Services Department for their support during this past year. In particular I wish to acknowledge the strong support and advice of the Marine Department in respect of our races in Victoria Harbour, without which such events would not have been possible. I would also like to reaffirm our close and cooperative relationship with the Hong Kong Sports Institute and in particular to recognise the SI Rowing professional coaching team as they make a huge contribution to the work of the Association in many ways.

Thank you to all our staff, led by Executive Director Annie LAM, for their hard work over this year, particularly with the additional commitments for the Asian Championships and planning for the coming World Championships. Our staff members face many challenges and a very substantial workload and we rely heavily on them. Thank you.

My sincere thanks to our Directors and to all Committee and Commission members for your valuable contribution to the Association and to rowing in Hong Kong.

And finally, thank you to all of you present here today for your support to the Association.

Mike TANNER, MH  
Chairman