

March 3, 2023

Dear Dr. Grotenhuis:

There is no doubt about your love for the WFNS and our recent phone call reflects our mutual desire to see a democratic and cohesive Administrative Council. We discussed this past week how important it is for us to unite the Administrative Council during this challenging time. As we agreed, the recent heated emails reflect a breakdown in deliberative democracy and show that there is conflict over two fundamental issues: one is the selection of several of the Committee Chairs and the other is the function of the Finance Committee.

As Chair of the WFNS Constitution and Bylaws committee, I want to again express my serious concern about the creation of a "special ad-hoc committee" that was revealed in a February 6th letter from our WFNS president Dr. El Abbadi with the stated purpose of looking into "irregularities" regarding the selection of committee chairs and issues related to the function of the Finance Committee concerning the 2025 World Congress. Our esteemed president is entitled to appoint new ad hoc committees but the presumed role and makeup of the committee as suggested in several communications is concerning for the following reasons:

1. President El Abbadi's letter from February 6, 2024 seems to request that this committee examine the actions of seven Administrative Council members regarding the appointments of Committee Chairs. This issue has not been officially brought to the attention of the Bylaws Chair and the committee for formal review. This unelected "investigative committee" is effectively acting as a parallel Bylaws Committee and cannot investigate or decide on this issue. As you know there are five Constitution and Bylaws committee members who are duly elected and are charged with precisely such matters. I was appointed Bylaws Chair by the president, and this has been approved by an Administrative Counsel vote as well. I would gently and kindly suggest that

the Bylaws committee be formally contacted by all parties involved in this matter and the committee will fairly adjudicate the matter. Furthermore, our Constitution explicitly provides for the Administrative Council to report to the Executive Committee (the governing body, and not an appointed “special ad hoc committee”) on its actions during the EC meeting of the World Congress.

2. The letter from our President on February 6th also suggested that this special ad hoc committee will evaluate issues related to the financial plan/budget for the 2025 Congress. This special ad hoc committee has no jurisdiction or responsibility to supervise the finances of the 2025 meeting, and that is a matter for the Finance Committees as clearly stated in the bylaws which in turn reports to the Executive Committee. The bylaws also clearly state the duty of the Finance Committee to oversee all the financial matters of the organization, including the World Congress budget. If there is any disagreement about the role or functioning of this committee, it should be resolved by the Bylaws Chair and the Constitution and Bylaws committee.
3. I am concerned that our President has selected committee members to investigate a conflict that involves her. This is clearly a conflict of interest as this would make her unintentionally the “judge, jury, and executioner” (*ego sum iudex, iuratus et carnifex*). This is precisely why our Bylaws exclude the President from the Constitution and Bylaws, Audit, and Nominating Committees.
4. While members of the committee are all esteemed colleagues, there is further conflict of interest due to that fact that some committee members have previously demonstrated their strong biases in publicly disseminated written statements. Therefore, this committee while consisting of distinguished individuals who care about the WFNS cannot be seen as impartial in this particular matter.
5. The President is a member of the Administrative Council and is entitled to deliberate with and decide matters on a simple majority basis as set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws. Decisions and actions of the Administrative

Council are to be reported to the EC during the EC meeting of the World Congress (not to a Presidential appointed “special ad hoc committee”).

As we discussed over the phone, we should use our combined influence to encourage cooperative and deliberative governance as well as compliance with the Constitution and Bylaws. The adherence to the rule of law is one of the serious issues identified in the functioning of the WFNS by several member societies. This special ad hoc committee as it stands risks perpetuating the negative narrative and will unintentionally only hasten further erosion of trust within the WFNS and between the WFNS and its member societies. I am certain that there are rational, legal and acceptable alternatives to this approach as I have outlined above. I hope to collaborate with you to address this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard R. Bendok". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Bernard R. Bendok, MD

2023-2025 WFNS Constitution and Bylaws Chair