

# NOTES FROM THE PRESENTATION OF SURVEY RESULTS BY THE AR COUNTRIES WORKING GROUP

Meeting of representatives from Adventure Racing countries to discuss  
the international structure options available to the sport.

Saturday, 15 April 2023 @ 21h00 CET

held on Zoom

## Attendance

1. Australia - Chris Dixon
2. Australia - Liam St Pierre
3. Brazil - Warley Costa
4. Canada - Nathalie Long
5. Canada - Alex Provost
6. Colombia - Ricky Vélez
7. Denmark - Sidsel Hull
8. Ecuador - Santiago Lopez
9. France - Romuald Viale
10. Ireland - Cormac Mac Donnell
11. Mexico - Javier Barreda
12. Netherlands - Ruurd Noordhuis
13. Netherlands - Harald Kraaij
14. South Africa - Lisa De Speville
15. Spain - Hector Nebot
16. UK - Damon De Boor
17. Uruguay - Nicolas Davyt
18. USA - Adrian Crane

## Apologies received from:

- Raul Fodor (Romania)
- Pablo Lopez (Spain) and Carlos (Spain) - Hector attended in their place.
- Alen Pujol, Uruguay

## **SUMMARY**

The AR Countries Working Group of Cormac, Damon, Lars and Lisa was formed after the World Obstacle meeting on 18 February 2023. Their task was to reach out to the countries that participate in adventure racing to poll their opinion on the way forward for the sport of Adventure Racing.

Over a period of seven/eight weeks, the group made contact with country representatives - those with associations / federations and those without structures but with active adventure racing communities. They have also been in contact with a number of countries where adventure racing is currently inactive or negligible and those who hope to have adventure racing in the future.

Countries were asked to respond to a survey - the results of which were presented to the countries in a Zoom meeting on Saturday, 15 April 2023.

Submissions were made by country representatives in their capacity representing their association / federation committee or their country's community.

Enquiries, comments & suggestions can be sent to the AR working group at:

**[arcountries@gmail.com](mailto:arcountries@gmail.com)**

Cormac Mac Donnell (Ireland)

Lars Bukkehave (Denmark)

Damon de Boor (UK)

Lisa de Speville (South Africa)

## NOTES

Please refer to the slides provided as an attachment.

### 1. Welcome

### 2. Points to Note

The information we have provided is based on the information the Working Group has been provided with over the past 8 weeks.

It is an unbiased/ fair summary of findings.

It represents a very good sample of opinions from AR communities around the world.

We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone that has contributed.

Spirit of team work, good energy and connection between countries has been great to experience and bodes well for the future.

### 3. Agenda

- Consultation Process & Result
- Comments from Community
- Discussion
- Vote to Accept Result
- Proposed Next Steps
- Agreement on Next Steps

### 4. Bullying and Intimidation

In reaching out to countries to discover their representatives and adventure racing situation, we spoke to association representatives, race directors, adventure racers and even people from federations of other disciplines. Through these interactions, we found that our people needed someone to talk to, to share their troubles and fears; someone in their sport who would understand, defend and stand up for them.

We were sad to hear stories of bullying, intimidation and harassment in the adventure racing environment. There are many people who are quite isolated and they are scared of speaking out for fear of more harassment.

**This. Is. Not. OK. This is abuse.**

Bullying WILL NOT be tolerated. It will be called out.

Contact the Working Group / Pre-Association group.

Right here and now we are not going to name names, but we want you to know something: we know.

## 5. Consultation process

**37 Countries contacted around the world** : Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, UK, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela.

**Survey Feedback Form distributed to all, with information from meetings and some guidance.**

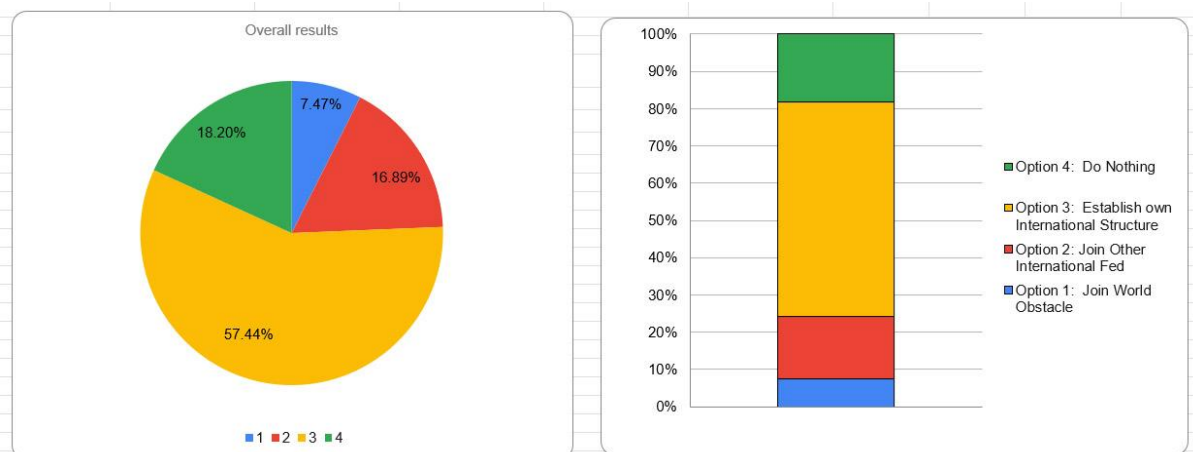
### Survey Results returned by 23 country representatives

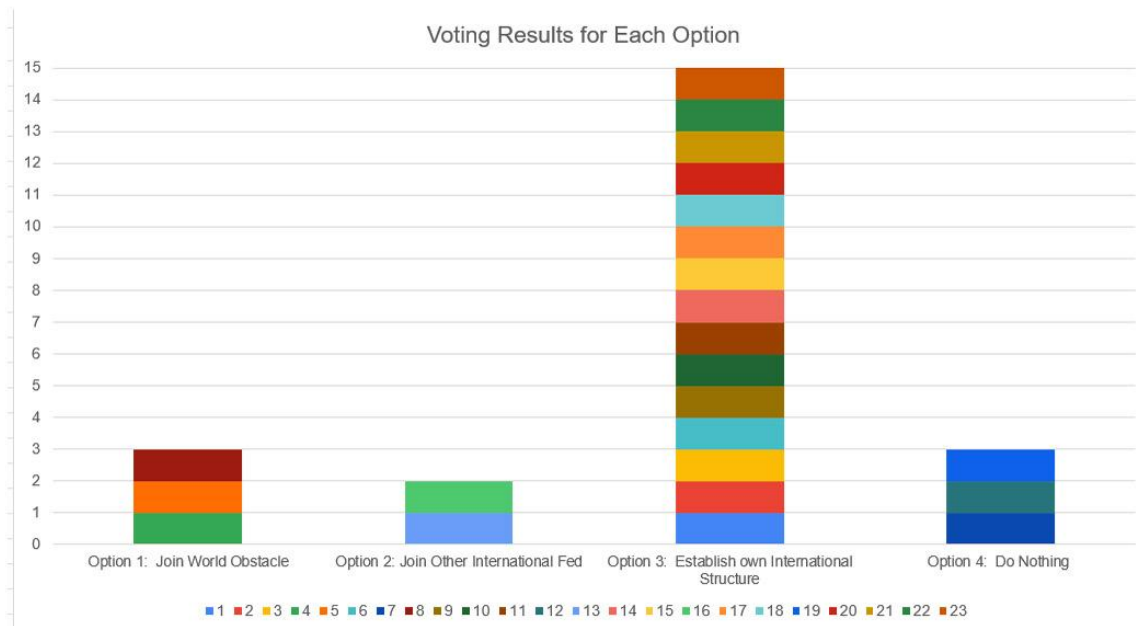
- 10 countries with national associations / federations
- 6 countries with active communities looking to establish own AR assoc
- 5 countries with small communities with few events
- 2 countries with no active adventure racing events and no participants

## 6. The Process

- Each country asked who is returning the form – who they represent (National Assoc, Group working to Establish or an AR Community)
- Each country asked to consider 4 options and return their preference based on local consultation and own surveys
- Survey forms returned to Working Group from 23 Countries
- WG have summarised result from all countries

## 7. SURVEY RESULTS





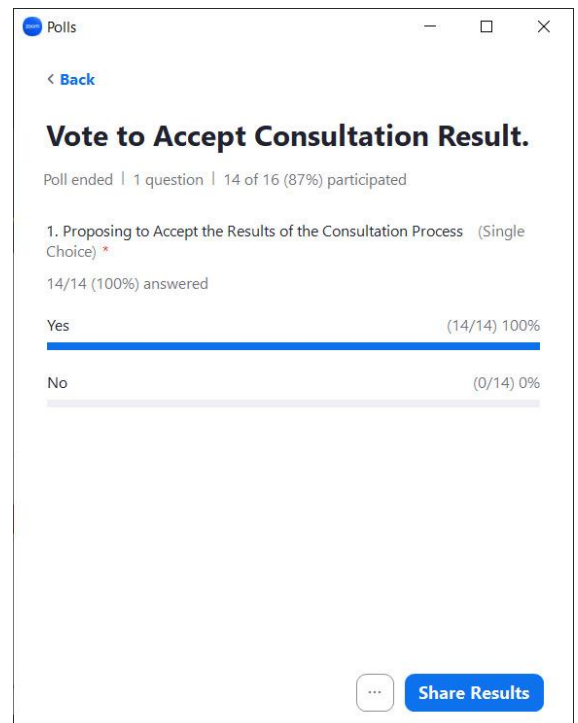
Please refer to the spreadsheet attachment and the slides to review all of the numbers submitted by the 23 countries that responded.

The results were accepted by the participants.

In addition, three votes were added from Damon, Cormac and Lisa who were unable to add their votes to this poll on Zoom as hosts of the meeting.

## 8. Summary

- 1 x country voted 100% to join an existing federation and their favoured federation was not World Obstacle.
- 2 x countries voted 100% to join World Obstacle but neither has adventure racing - events or participants - in their country.
- 1 x country voted 100% to do nothing (based on federations requiring fees and being more hassle for organisers)
- In only one country did joining World Obstacle (#1 - 47%) rank higher than establishing our own AR association (#3 - 38%)
- Overall, countries favoured doing nothing over joining World Obstacle.



## 9. Conclusion

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## 10. Comments from the survey submissions

### COMMENTS - Why NOT voting for World Obstacle

- FISO representatives seem self serving.
- FISO has dubious connections with A1.
- AR is not obstacle course racing, the activity is not comparable.
- FISO could also require adventure racing to conform to the rules and regulations of FISO and for teams to compete in FISO-sanctioned events.
- We would be a sideline to obstacle racing.
- Starting from scratch is hard, but obstacle racing is not well aligned to AR.
- We don't have Olympic or other ambitions; it really doesn't matter if Adventure Racing fits the Olympic model.
- Sceptical about FISO's motives and intentions.
- AR is unique and not part of a platform that Ian Adamson has created for us to 'plug into'.

### COMMENTS - Reasons for joining another federation (#2)

- This could save a considerable amount of time and effort.
- If an existing federation would allow AR to continue with enough freedom to keep the essence of the sport intact, this would also be an option.
- It can take time to build our own association so joining another relevant association makes sense - like orienteering on account of the navigation element which sets adventure racing apart.
- It's potentially the quickest way to grow the sport.
- The cross over and support from an association like Orienteering could be beneficial to both audiences.
- Create an international association of AR, then discuss with another IF; more for being strong and being able to discuss with others.
- Joining IOF: We believe that it is the most agile step to be able to have an international official status and that nobody tries to appropriate our sport in the near future.

### COMMENTS - Why establish our own association

- Adventure racing is a dynamic, diverse, physical and mentally challenging form of activity.
- Adventure racing is a unique amalgamation of activities.

- We are AR, we are not a sub-sport. We need our own, independent voice.
  - AR is unique sport.
  - We are a unique, independent sport that is unlike any other sport. The skill set of an adventure racer does not sit with another sport.
  - There is more to AR than the physical or athletic prowess of its participants. It encourages teamwork, decision making and reaction in a natural environment that is distinctly different from many other sports.
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- AR would benefit from forming an association. It needs grass-roots racing, support for RDs and a progression / coaching path.
  - We need a structure that does what we decide we need it to do.
  - We can tailor a less formal association to our needs, driven by the sport and our available resources.
  - Adventure Racing needs creativity and innovation in building its own structure that is specific to its needs.
  - For AR to be recognised as a sport, and to be represented and governed by a member-elected organisation.
  - It would be best to start fresh with a uniform approach. The spirit of the sport is unique and contiguous around the world.
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- The interests of the sport are best served and best understood by an Association of those involved in the sport.
  - Shaping the future of the sport is safer in the hands of those who live and breathe the sport rather than within another federation that might have other objectives and priorities.
  - Options 1 or 2 do not fit what AR should be. Option 4 leaves us a bit vulnerable. That leaves Option 3, but that seems the right approach anyway.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> step is what we are doing, 2<sup>nd</sup> is to move forward with our own identity. Then decide if it is better to be under an umbrella or not.
  - We think in terms of a growth model. Start small, learn, develop and see where we are going together.
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- We know that own federation is the most complicated/demanding way, but it is necessary and essential if we want to manage our own development.
  - While forming an independent AR governing body will be the slowest option, it would ultimately get us the best possible outcome for our requirements, and the ability to shape destiny our own way rather than being beholden to another NGB and being a 'minority' to their main membership.
  - Even if it took a long time to create an independent governing body, that timeline would allow for steady organic growth and a body that solely has the best interests of the Adventure Racing community at heart.

#### **COMMENTS - Why we should Do Nothing (#4)**

- If it wasn't for the WO attempt to absorb the sport and the A1 involvement with WO etc we wouldn't be having the discussion and would probably largely be OK with that, keeping informality with the existing ARWS structure being the default event structure for international events.

- Do nothing is a valid option however the sport needs a common unified direction which wouldn't happen in this case.
- I don't think there's an immediate need for this, I'm not aware of urgent problems that need solving, but working towards, over a number of years, an internationally recognised federation will grow and maintain the sport.
- This is a sport for middle-age folks that have enough money to travel around the world. Private individuals are the ones that assume risks, money and invest time to plan and execute an adventure race. Associations, federations require time and commitment for free. Federations & assoc will want licences, permits, requirements for more \$ and more hassle for the organiser. World Obstacle is just going to complicate things.

## 11. What next?

1. Communication to WO, report result and request removal of Adventure Racing from World Obstacle's agenda. (Zoom call + letter / email) - The community has been clear.
  2. Communication of survey results to global AR community through AR media (press release)
  3. WG will schedule a Zoom meeting specifically to create a Pre-Association group to establish the foundation of an association.
  4. This completes our mandate.
- AR is unique - A representative body can be custom-built with creativity and innovation.
  - It does not need to have the same functions as other sporting associations.
  - This is something the new Pre-Association will discover.
  - Pre-Association tasks include:
    - research & consult
    - define objectives of AR association
    - define the tasks that will serve and support the AR community
    - feasibility - defining running expenses and basic funding streams through the association's services
    - TIMELINE: 6-12 months

## 12. Closing

The Working Group will organise a follow-up meeting and will use this meeting to recruit people to participate in a Pre-Association group to explore feasibility and to sketch the pathway to be followed.

With thanks to the Working Group & all country representatives.

Let's move forward together in a progressive, positive way for the sport.



### 13. Discussion items that came up on Zoom

**Warley:** The Brazilian Federation will support any decision, even if it is different to our own current position.

The Federation has concerns because in past years, nothing was done by the community and now this action is like a reaction to the FISO position.

We expect that the global community will really work and put focus and dedication. To create an independent organisation will take time and effort.

The community has reacted to FISO. They did not get together before this. It is a concern.

We believe the future will be different. We need to have an action and not a reaction. This initiative now is the result of a reaction.

Either way, we will support.

We need to define clear goals for the new federation and what are the benefits for the sport. Without clear goals, it is just a group of people.

**Cormac:**

Yes, very good and correct. We are all very aware of that point. I would add that a lot of positive change in the world comes as a result of reaction and it is probably a good thing. This has awakened the community to some of the vulnerabilities in the sport and a lot of the community are involved with racing and not so much thinking about the future pathways into the sport and sustainability. There is no doubt that this is a reaction, but it is a positive thing for us to move forward on.

**Liam:**

Request to make the survey results public. Don't see why they should be private in the interests of transparency.

**Cormac & Lisa:**

Agreed. Cormac suggested a survey and mentioned our consciousness of privacy and creating a 'safe space' for countries.

A quick poll was held and the countries present said they didn't mind sharing results.

*Note from the Working Group: In the survey results in the presentation, the Working Group showed only a graph of the total percentage votes for each option. Following Liam's request, Lisa shared her screen with the table showing the data submitted by the countries in the online survey. The Working Group preferred not to show the country names because of the bullying and intimidation mentioned above; at least not until the countries had given permission. The results tables have been added to the presentation slides.*

There was some discussion about the numbers and how the percentages were achieved.

In short, countries submitted the percentage split of their responses gathered for options 1 to 4. We added up these numbers and got a percentage for each option from the total.

Country responses were not weighted whether they had associations or just had active communities. Also, for countries that collected community responses, we did not request their submission of how many respondents they had. From our conversations with countries, do know that community-response numbers ranged from 50 to over 400.

Regardless of how the sums are run, the response is very clear that the Adventure Racing countries do not want to join World Obstacle.

The results were accepted by the meeting participants.

**Javier asked in the Chat:**

“What will happen with the A1 if we create an international AR federation (option #3), will they join the new international federation or they will stay with WO?”

**Damon:** I can't answer that. It is their private business.

**Cormac:** This is not part of our business and the scope of this meeting.

2. If we decide and create an international AR federation (option #3), will WO recognize it and leave us alone to work in peace with our new federation?

**Damon:** We don't know. There has been the commitment from Ian and World Obstacle that what the community decides is a decision that they will respect. We will share these findings with Ian after this meeting.

3. Every AR association from around the world (old or new) should join or need to join the new AR Federation (option #3)?

**Damon:** No. It is the decision of the country. The country could be a member or observer. But this structure would need to be worked out.

**Ricky:**

To have an international federation, it must be supported by all countries.

**Warley:**

Mentioned that Brazil has an A1 series for this year.

Lisa added that A1, as an Event Coordinating company, exists outside of International Associations and that A1 series events this year and the next and the next and onward will continue as they are.

There were conversations around World Obstacle and concerns that they will ignore the survey results and continue to look for nominations for their technical committee under World Obstacle for adventure racing stuff, none of our countries should be supporting this or nominating people for this.

We expect World Obstacle to step back from their plans involving Adventure Racing. Ian has communicated in the past that they will respect the decision of the community.

In discussing our next steps, **Adrian** expressed a concern about our timeline being tied in with a timeline reporting to World Obstacle.

Lisa explained that the Working Group's tasks have been step-by-step and wrapping up the reporting is one of those tasks on their timeline to accomplish in the next few days before moving on to next meetings and such. This, respectfully, is part of our task to complete.

**Contact:** arcountries@gmail.com

**ENDS**