

## **FIM AFRICA GENERAL ASSEMBLY – LEISURE & TOURING - 2025**

Early into my appointment as chairman of the Leisure and Touring Commission , I set myself the task to identify what issues existed regarding LEISURE and TOURING. Initially I had compiled a list of what I felt were important to FIM Africa and the L & T commission.

These were Biker Safety, Social Media upgrade, FIM Africa visibility, promotion of FIM Africa bike rallies , rider training, promotion of the FIM Advantage card and providing cross border bikers with travel information.

We began with discussing ways to improve FIM Africa visibility through social media. We redesigned the L &T Logo and set about encouraging the member commissions to share information about biking events and projects happening around Africa. This is proving to be somewhat cumbersome as posts need to be vetted by the commissions before being forwarded to Head Office for onward transmission. It has however resulted in more information being shared on our Whatsap group and ultimately on Facebook and Instagram. The challenge to increase the media traffic to our web page remains on our list. Some commissions are pretty good at reporting information about some of the better known events such as the UBUNTU , ULYSSES and DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN rallies.

We looked into Rider training and while the possibility of engaging a trainer to travel between member countries to train trainers was discussed it was determined that logistics would be too complicated to consider as well as the high cost. I did a costing to send 4 experienced and willing riders from Zambia to Johannesburg for training as trainers and discovered that such projects need to be funded at FMN level and not through FIM . I knew that in exceptional cases FIM might be able to help. In fact I sent a funding application to Damiano Zamana in 2024 but wasn't successful. I'm sure if L & T was contributing to the FMN coffers it would be a lot easier. As I'm sure you know, the average rider doesn't need to pay for a competition licence to ride as long as they have a valid driver's licence. To solve the shortage of project funding, the Kenya biking fraternity have apparently set up their own Biking Association. I do believe this is a practical solution. I imagine it requires a great deal of administration, however, it does provide funding for various projects on a national level.

In South Africa it would seem that while Leisure and Touring have a FIM Africa representative it isn't a part of the South African FMN.

In the context of safety, we discussed the problems faced in East Africa regarding Boda Boda motorcycles and high mortalities. This is certainly an area that needs to be pursued with the relevant authorities to reduce serious injuries. We had discussed the possibility of suggesting that such passenger carrying bikes should be licenced with advanced rider skills being prerequisite. Many riders would argue that they've been riding bikes for an eternity and know what they are doing. Well, let's compare that to a competitive rider who spends hours honing his riding skills to be more competitive and safer on the track. How many of us spend the time to practice road skills such as emergency braking or trail braking in a turn. Why do we need to learn the hard way? We have started an open ended FIM Africa Rider Safety document which anyone can add to if they have something to share. This can be printed out and shared with new riders, licencing authorities and clubs and serves to share practical biking knowledge.

We have also discussed the FIM Advantage Card on numerous occasions and are yet to come up with a workable platform. The biggest obstacle appears to be that of finding an insurance provider with a big enough footprint across the African continent to be able to partner with. While there appears to be a bike recovery program in existence in Zimbabwe , it's unlikely that the service would be available across its borders. This remains one of our projects especially in light of the planned FIM Africa Rally in 2027. The key to its success in Africa would appear to be whether it can be justified by offering tangible benefits.

On the subject of the proposed FIM Africa rally which is to take place in Eswartini in Swaziland, a great deal of groundwork has been carried out. Maboku Maleka , the South African Commission has made it his goal to make it a reality following FIM guidelines. The event is intended to showcase FIM Africa and increase its visibility among the general biking fraternity. A request for initial funding was made and in fact USD 2000 was earmarked for this purpose. Most of the funding however is to be sourced from sponsorship with a large proportion coming from the Eswartini Municipality itself.



The recent Mosi-O-Tunya Rally which was inspired by the Lusaka Chapter of the Harley Davidson biking organisation was of great interest to Maboku and myself. We wanted to see how successfully a cross-border event could be run. Overall a lot of work went into organizing the event with a major focus on safety, logistics and of course promoting the Harley brotherhood. It was noted that the event could have been better organised if there were better communication and delegation of duties. The biggest hurdle though seemed to be the reluctance of the Zambian Border Officials to facilitate border formalities. There were many lessons learned and hopefully future events will be able to avoid the pitfalls.



Biking across Africa is no easy task and requires a great deal of planning, patience and perseverance. However, for those intrepid souls who succeed, the huge diversity that Africa offers is immensely rewarding. With this in mind it is an on-going task to encourage the subscribed L & T Commissions to compile and update local information that global bikers will find useful. One of the most useful and better known travel documents is the vehicle Carnet which it has been noted can considerably reduce border crossing delays. The question has been raised on numerous occasions whether FIM can launch a similar document for Bikers and somehow link it to the Advantage Card. Another travel aid that many bikers overlook is the International Driving Permit. While most licences are accepted in Zambia, roadblocks in some countries can insist that a foreign drivers licence isn't valid. It also helps that these permits are printed in several languages.

Having witnessed first-hand what riders face when entering Zambia via Kazungula for example, it isn't surprising that crossings take so long, often in excess of 4 hours. There are 6 separate queues (immigration, Customs, Bridge toll, Road toll, Council Levy and insurance) that one has to negotiate to complete formalities. Each one

requires rider and Bike information to be entered onto a computer which may not be accessible due to the system being down or due to power cuts. The key would appear to be the establishment of pre-clearing facilities so that the necessary details are already on the system prior to arrival. Another suggestion subject to discussion, would be to print a QR code with all the relevant information on the back of a card such as the FIM Advantage Card. This could save time and enhance the benefits of the FIM Advantage card at the same time. I imagine such a scheme would require somebody to keep the data constantly updated though. Something that may well be beyond the scope of FIM Africa.

We have also worked on bike awareness among drivers, getting the message out by creating and distributing bumper stickers and licence discs. We found that it was far more effective to have these sponsored and printed by local businesses as opposed to offering them for sale in order to cover printing costs.

I have also made it my mission to contact Long distance Bikers wherever possible. Living next to The Victoria Falls makes this somewhat easier as most Global Bikers visit this area at some point in their travels. I've found them to be a wealth of information with regards to biking across Africa. I regard these riders as incredible ambassadors for the countries they visit.

In conclusion, Biker Safety continues to be our main focus. Statistics show that motorcycle related accidents continue to rise year after year worldwide. We have to keep trying to improve safety awareness and rider proficiency on public roads particularly in Africa.

**IAN BROOKS**

**CHAIRMAN: LEISURE, TOURING AND SAFETY**