

Dear Excellency Turki bin Abdel Muhsin Al-Asheikh, Chairman of the General Sports Authority,

Dear Mr. Al Sulaiman Mottaz Abdulrahman, President of the Saudi Arabia Chess Federation,

Distinguished guests,

Dear participants!

Let me welcome you on behalf of FIDE, the World Chess Federation, to the King Salman World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships, here in the beautiful city of Riyadh, capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is very important to note the huge development that Saudi Arabian Chess Federation has undergone recently given that it was only accepted as a full member of FIDE in 2016. The organisation of these World Championships brings to mind the organisation of the Chess Olympiad in 1986 in Dubai which eventually was followed by other major world sporting events. Undoubtedly, the patronage of His Highness King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud can lead to an even larger explosion of sport activities.

The four historic events offer a record total prize fund of US\$2,000,000 with the Open events having individual prize funds of US\$750,000 each and the women event having a prize fund of US\$ 250,000 each. On behalf of the chess world, FIDE expresses its gratitude to the General Sports Authority and Sela-Sport for its cooperation and assistance in the preparations for this landmark in the history of chess in Saudi Arabia and our royal sport.

We are confident that all officials and participants from 55 Federations, among them 10 men out of the World Top-15 as well as 11 out the World Top-15 women, will enjoy excellent hospitality and benefit from organization of the highest standard in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as excellent facilities of the iconic KAPSARC Apex Convention centre, the venue of the tournament.

We will be looking forward to our continued cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its Sports Authorities and the local Chess Federation, in organization of more exciting chess events in this country.

Your Excellency, I am going to tell you something from my heart. FIDE motto is 'We are one family' and we firmly believe in this. We also believe that our sport, and especially such events, should help in developing peace and friendship among people. We would like to see the next event, here, as King Salman Peace & Friendship World Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships. Where everybody will be welcomed. I am certain that Saudi Arabia can send a strong message for peace and friendship around the world and we are here with my colleagues to help. We are ready to meet with you or your people in the next days, to see how to proceed with the next steps. I want our chess players who are here, our arbiters, our officials, your people, your officials, to be proud in the future that they have been part of the beginning of a great effort, which I hope is going to have great success.

Let me on behalf of FIDE wish everyone the season's greetings and all the best!

Let the strongest win!

Gens Una Sumus