



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

140th IOC Session
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Dear friends and colleagues,

Today's Session has been called in order to address the situation at the International Boxing Association. But before coming to this, I believe that I owe you an update on the developments that took place since our last consultation call on the topic that has unfortunately topped our agenda for the last 16 months – the Russian invasion of Ukraine with the support of Belarus and its consequences for the Olympic Movement.

During the past 16 months our outrage of this brutal war, our compassion with the human suffering and our solidarity with the Ukrainian Olympic community remain as strong as ever.

We have discussed in depth the dilemma that this war has confronted us within the Olympic Movement. We have laid out our principles to navigate this intractable and divisive conflict.

Our guiding principle is contributing to peace through the unifying mission of sport.

Uniting the entire world in peaceful competition: this is the fundamental idea of the Olympic Games.

In order to achieve this, sport must build bridges. We must not erect walls. We must not deepen divisions.

This is the contribution to peace that sport can offer: opening a pathway to peace in ways that exclusion and division do not.

So where do we stand now with our efforts for contributing to peace through sport?

With our recommendations from the 28th of March, we are advancing four equally important elements:

Our solidarity with Ukraine.

Our contribution to peace through the unifying mission of sport.

Our duty to serve all athletes, without any discrimination whatsoever.

Our sanctions against the Russian and Belarusian states and governments.

In this way we are applying our core values of peace, unity, solidarity and non-discrimination to find a pathway that serves the interests of the athletes.

Our values are not just abstract concepts.

Because at the end of the day, it is all about the athlete. This is where our values become real. This is why our principles matter.

We are here to support the athletes of the entire world to make their Olympic dream come true.

This is why we promote the participation of every athlete who accepts the rules, respects the Olympic Charter and has qualified on the field of play.

The athlete is at the heart of the rationale for our recommendations.

And yet, despite offering a workable pathway forward with our values-based recommendations, we are still confronted with two irreconcilable positions. The Russian side wants us to ignore the war. The Ukrainian side wants us to totally isolate anyone with a Russian and Belarusian passport. Either position is diametrically opposed to our mission and the Olympic Charter.

So in the interest of the athletes: how do we navigate such an intractable situation?

Our answer is very clear: our values are our compass.

This is why our athlete-centred recommendations address our core values of peace, unity, solidarity and non-discrimination.

It is not an easy solution. But we all know that extremely complex political problems do not have easy solutions. Only populists pretend to have simplistic solutions for the most complex problems in the world.

Our position is clear: We condemned the war from the first day. We imposed unprecedented sanctions on the Russian and Belarusian governments.

As a global organisation we have to manage a complex reality. The world is not black or white. We are confronted with a cacophony of views and competing interests that are trying to pull us in different directions.

While 141 countries have, like us, condemned the war, the international community is not as united when it comes to consequences of this condemnation. We learned that 52 governments, representing only 15 per cent of the world population, have, like us, imposed sanctions on the Russian and Belarusian governments. This is not to say that

one side is right and the other is wrong. This is just to describe the reality of a divided and fragmented world.

In this world, we have to protect the athletes.

In this world, we have to protect our unity.

In this world, we have to defend our values.

In this world, we have to oppose all kinds of discrimination – like we have done, and like we are doing, in the too many other wars and confrontations.

While we see very encouraging signs that overall our values-based approach is working, the different interests are still trying to pull us in different directions.

We have the Russian side that considers the strict conditions to be unacceptable, humiliating and discriminatory. The Russian government accuses us of acting against our political neutrality, while at the same time this very same government is shamelessly trying to put together fully politicised sport competitions.

We have the Ukrainian side that denounces us for siding with Russia. Their government insists on “total isolation” of all Russians and Belarusians, because they consider everyone with a Russian or Belarusian passport to be a supporter of the war. This even goes as far as banning athletes with intellectual disabilities at the ongoing Special Olympics.

We have the vast majority of the Olympic Movement stakeholders from across the globe – the athletes, the National Olympic Committees from all 5 continents, the continental associations, the International Federations: this overwhelming majority is calling on us to

continue with our athlete-centred approach to find a pathway – a values-based course of action – that defends the rights of all athletes.

A course of action that pushes back on the growing politicisation of sport in some countries.

A course of action that strengthens the autonomy of sport.

A course of action that protects the right of every rule-abiding athlete to compete, regardless of their background.

A course of action that preserves our unity.

Let me be very clear: what is at stake is nothing less than our values – nothing less than the unity of our Olympic Movement – nothing less than the true nature of international sport.

In this time when our autonomy is being undermined by some governments; in this time when some forces want to divide our global sports movement; in these challenging times, this unity is fundamental for the future of values-based truly global sport.

If these divisive political forces would succeed with their efforts to decide which athlete can compete in which competition, then we will end up with sport competitions only among athletes from like-minded political blocs. The Games of Political Block A. The Games of Political Block B. And probably separate Games for those countries who do not want to align themselves in one way or another.

In such politicised sport, universal Olympic Games will no longer be possible.

In such politicised sport, world championships, in the true sense of the word, will no longer be possible.

This politicisation would be the weaponisation of sport. This goes against everything sport and we in the Olympic Movement are standing for.

Therefore, we have to answer the question – how is our athlete-centred, values-based approach working?

The overwhelming majority of the world's athletes respect or support our approach.

We are encouraged by the many IFs that have organised international sport events and even world championships successfully applying our recommendations. For this, I would like to express all our thanks and appreciation to them.

At the European level, the Individual European Fencing Championships took place in Bulgaria this past weekend. The International Fencing Federation had moved these championships from Poland to Bulgaria because the Polish government had interfered in the autonomy of sport by refusing to issue visas for individual neutral athletes with Russian or Belarusian passports. This necessary relocation to protect the autonomy of sport proved to be successful. In Bulgaria, individual neutral athletes were able to participate. At the same time, it is important to note that Ukrainian athletes participated in the championships as well. However, the Ukrainian athletes were only allowed to compete in those disciplines where individual neutral athletes did not participate.

At the world level, the World Judo Championships took place in Qatar with the participation of individual neutral athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport. These world championships were very successfully organised.

The World Taekwondo Championships held in Azerbaijan are another example of a successful world championship that was organised with the participation of individual neutral athletes. There was even a record number of national federations taking part.

Contrary to what the naysayers were claiming, none of these competitions collapsed in chaos. All the respective IFs have applied our recommendations and strict conditions. In the process, they rejected a number of applicants who wanted to compete as individual neutral athletes because they did not fulfil these strict conditions.

All three championships took place without incidents. The athletes competed with respect for each other and with respect for the rules of sport. Through statements and in conversations, the athletes made it clear that they want to compete against the best athletes of the world, no matter where they come from. They want to feel like true World or European champions. They do not want to see any athlete being punished for the actions of their governments.

Therefore, I would like to thank once more the respective International Federations – the International Fencing Federation, the International Judo Federation and World Taekwondo – for protecting the autonomy of sport and protecting the athletes. Thank you for putting the relevant procedures in place and following up diligently on them. Our thanks go to all the competing athletes who demonstrated the real Olympic spirit of peaceful competition without any discrimination.

But what does all this mean for the Ukrainian athletes? Many of them would have liked to compete internationally. Yet, at the respective judo and taekwondo world championships the Ukrainian athletes were absent. Why? Because they had not been allowed to participate, following the instructions of the Ukrainian sports ministry.

In other words, the Ukrainian athletes are being sanctioned by their own government for the war that has been started by the Russian and Belarusian governments.

It is hard to understand why the Ukrainian government is depriving their own athletes from their chance to qualify for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and to make the Ukrainian people proud. It is hard to understand why Ukrainian athletes are allowed to compete in tennis but not in table tennis. It is hard to understand why they are allowed to compete in cycling but not in swimming. It is hard to understand why in fencing, a Ukrainian athlete can compete in discipline A, while his Ukrainian teammate cannot compete in discipline B.

What the entire Olympic community and in fact the entire world is longing for: Ukrainian athletes shining brightly in international competitions. We all want them to have the opportunity to qualify for the Olympic Games Paris 2024. This means participating now in the qualification events, so that they can make the Ukrainian people proud – showing the resilience of the Ukrainian people and of the Ukrainian Olympic community.

We want to give them this opportunity to qualify and finally participate in the Olympic Games.

Imagine for one moment, what this would mean: the rapturous welcome of the Ukrainian Olympic team by hundreds of thousands of live spectators along the River Seine; the wave of enthusiasm cheering on the Ukrainian athletes in their competitions, watched by billions of people around the globe who are following the Olympic Games. What a powerful demonstration of resilience and of determination. What a moment of pride, joy and hope for all Ukrainian people.

For all these reasons, we – the Olympic Movement – want to make it possible for every Ukrainian athlete to qualify now and to participate next year in the Olympic Games. Therefore, through the respective International Federation, we will support every Ukrainian athlete in their preparation and participation in any competition that they want to take part in – so that they can make the Ukrainian people proud.

We are very encouraged by the fact that the vast majority of the international community understands this challenging situation for sport and supports our values-based course of action as well. This has been expressed by many statements of political leaders on the level of the United Nations, intergovernmental organisations and heads of state and government.

The most recent example is the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, Japan. The Presidents and Prime Ministers of France, host of the Olympic Games Paris 2024; Italy, host of the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026; the United States, host of the Olympic Games Los Angeles 2028; Canada, Germany, Great Britain and Japan said: “While fully respecting the autonomy of sporting organisations, we are focused on fair sporting competition as well as on ensuring that Russian and Belarusian athletes are in no way appearing as representatives of their states.” This is exactly our position and I have thanked those leaders for their great support.

This alignment of the G7 position and our approach was evident in my meeting with the French President, Emmanuel Macron, two weeks ago. We reaffirmed this full alignment and also reaffirmed that the decision on the participation at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 will be taken by the IOC at the appropriate time and that we will continue to cooperate in this respect.

We therefore have a strong base to protect the athlete. We have a strong base for our mission to unite the entire world in peaceful competition. We have a strong base of support for our unity.

From the very first moment we are – and we will be – in this together. We are standing together in the interest of the athlete. The athletes bring our values to life.

The athletes want to excel in their sport. The athletes want to compete against the best athletes of the world. The athletes want to overcome the differences that separate us outside of the field of play. The athletes want to show the best that humankind can be if we are guided by peace and solidarity.

The athletes make our values a reality.

This concludes my update. Thank you very much.

Together with my written report, you now have the full picture of all our activities and our overall direction. I am ready to answer any questions you may have.