Q&A regarding the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions

The following Q&A addresses the current situation after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) issued recommendations for International Federations and international sports event organisers on the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions, following a request by the Olympic Summit.

This Q&A was first published on 31 March 2023, and the latest update was made on 25 October 2023. It replaces the Q&A which was published in early February 2023, before the IOC recommendations were released.

(Added on 25 October 2023) Why did the IOC suspend the Russian Olympic Committee and what are the consequences of this decision?

The unilateral decision taken by the Russian Olympic Committee on 5 October 2023 to include, as its members, the regional sports organisations that are under the authority of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Ukraine (namely Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia) constitutes a breach of the Olympic Charter because it violates the territorial integrity of the NOC of Ukraine, as recognised by the IOC in accordance with the Olympic Charter.

In view of the above, the IOC Executive Board (EB) decided on 12 October 2023 that:

1. The Russian Olympic Committee is suspended with immediate effect until further notice.
2. The suspension has the following consequences:
   a. The Russian Olympic Committee is no longer entitled to operate as a National Olympic Committee, as defined in the Olympic Charter, and cannot receive any funding from the Olympic Movement.
   b. As stated in the IOC’s position and recommendations of 28 March 2023, which remain fully in place, the IOC reserves the right to decide about the participation of individual neutral athletes with a Russian passport in the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 at the appropriate time.

The IOC EB also reserves the right to take any further decision or measure depending on the development of this situation.

(Added on 25 October 2023) What does the IOC say in response to statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin in which he accuses the IOC of “ethnic discrimination”?

Participation in the Olympic Games is by no means a human right and the recent amendment of the Olympic Charter is not related to it.

The strict conditions the IOC has set out in its recommendations to the FIs for the participation of Individual Neutral Athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions are compliant with the Olympic Charter. They are a reaction to the breach of the Olympic Charter by the Russian and Belarusian governments.
We firmly reject the accusations being made that these measures constitute “ethnic discrimination”.

What is the reaction of the IOC to the decisions of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) regarding participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in the Paralympic Games Paris 2024?

The IOC takes note of the decisions of the IPC, which are in line with the recommendations of the IOC to International Federations and Sport Event Organisers. The IOC is encouraged by the many International Federations that have already organised international sports events, and even world championships, successfully applying our recommendations. We are seeing that the participation of individual neutral athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions is widely accepted by the athletes’ community.

We are here to support the athletes of the entire world to make their Olympic dreams come true. We continue to promote the participation of every athlete who accepts the rules, respects the Olympic Charter and has qualified on the field of play. The recommendations of the IOC make clear that:

- Athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport must compete only as Individual Neutral Athletes.
- Teams of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport cannot be considered.
- Athletes who actively support the war cannot compete. Support personnel who actively support the war cannot be entered.
- Athletes who are contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military or national security agencies cannot compete. Support personnel who are contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military or national security agencies cannot be entered.

The IOC has condemned the war from the start. We imposed unprecedented sanctions on the Russian and Belarusian governments. We have established a Solidarity Fund for Ukraine so that the athletes have support to overcome the tremendous challenges they are facing to make their Olympic dreams come true. Some 3,000 athletes have already benefitted from the help the IOC Solidarity Fund is offering. These efforts take the form not just of financial aid, but also logistical support to make it possible for Ukrainian athletes to continue to take part in competitions by providing travel support, training facilities, accommodation, equipment and uniforms, amongst other things. The IOC wants to enable the participation of a strong Ukrainian team at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

The IOC continues to stand in full solidarity with the Ukrainian athletes and the Olympic community of Ukraine.

What is the IOC’s reaction to the decision by the Ukrainian government to amend its decree with regard to Ukrainian athletes competing in international competitions against Individual Neutral Athletes?

This decision by the Ukrainian government will allow Ukrainian athletes to participate in international competitions and will enable them to qualify for the Olympic Games Paris 2024. We are glad that they will be given this opportunity, and at the same time we are aware of the difficult inner conflicts they may have, given the aggression against their country. Therefore, we encourage International Federations to handle situations involving Ukrainian
and Individual Neutral Athletes with the necessary degree of sensitivity. We continue to stand in full solidarity with the Ukrainian athletes and the Olympic community of Ukraine.

(Almended on 25 October 2023) What is the reaction of the international community and political leaders to the IOC’s approach to the question of participation by athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions?

The IOC has received a lot of support. It is very encouraged by the fact that the vast majority of the international community understands the challenging situation for sport and supports its values-based course of action. This has been expressed by many statements from political leaders at the level of the United Nations, intergovernmental organisations and heads of state and government.

In May 2023, the Group of Seven (G7) Leaders expressed support in a statement at their summit in Hiroshima/Japan. Early in July 2023, the Non-Aligned Movement, chaired by Azerbaijan, which includes 120 of the 193 UN Member States, also declared its support and in September 2023 the G20 Leaders expressed their support.

The G7 statement says that the G7 are “fully respecting the autonomy of sporting organizations” and want to ensure that “Russian and Belarusian athletes are in no way appearing as representatives of their states”. This is fully aligned with the position of the IOC in this respect.

The IOC warmly welcomed the G7 support for the autonomy of sport and for the IOC’s recommendations on the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport, only as individual, neutral athletes. This commitment to the autonomy of sports organisations comes at a crucial time, when it is threatened by a few governments. Therefore, the IOC is very grateful to the G7 Leaders for their unequivocal statement.

The G7 Summit is an international forum held annually for the leaders of the G7 member states of France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Italy and Canada (in order of rotating presidency), and the European Union (EU).

On 7 July, the IOC welcomed a Declaration by the Non-Aligned Movement which includes 120 of the 193 UN Member States. The Declaration, which was passed unanimously, emphasises that “the participation of athletes from all 206 National Olympic Committees in Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games would be a strong symbol of unity of humanity." In this respect, it expresses its “support to the efforts and initiatives undertaken by the International Olympic Committee to this end”.

This position is also fully aligned with the IOC recommendations for International Federations and international sports event organisers on the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions, including qualifiers for the Olympic Games.

The IOC warmly welcomed the support by the 120 member states of the Non-Aligned Movement. It is greatly encouraged by this strong commitment to the unifying mission of the Olympic Games.

Read the full statement of the Non-Aligned Movement here.
In September 2023, the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration said: “We reiterate our commitment to the G20 as the premier forum for global economic cooperation and its continued operation in the spirit of multilateralism, on the basis of consensus, with all members participating on an equal footing in all its events including Summits.”

It continued: “We also look forward to the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024 as a symbol of peace, dialogue amongst nations and inclusivity, with participation of all.”

IOC President Thomas Bach welcomed the statement. He said in Lausanne: “We would like to thank very warmly the G20 Leaders, who include for the first time the African Union, for their invaluable support. The IOC will continue to work with full commitment to achieve these goals, which are also our goals.”

The IOC has also taken note of the negative reactions, in particular from some European governments.

It is deplorable to see that some governments do not want to respect the majority within the Olympic Movement or the autonomy of sport which they are requesting from other countries, and are praising in countless speeches and UN and European Union resolutions.

It is deplorable that these governments do not address the question of double standards with which we were confronted in the consultation calls.

We have not seen a single comment from them about their attitude towards the participation of athletes whose countries are involved in the other 70 wars, armed conflicts and crises in the world.

It is even more deplorable that they grossly neglect the very clear statement of the two Special Rapporteurs from the UN Human Rights Council, while in other issues they are always highlighting their firm requests for the respect of human rights.

As stated by the UN Special Rapporteur: “The idea is not that we are going to recognise human rights to people who are like us and with whom we agree on their actions and on their behaviour. The idea is that anyone has the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of their passport.”

Read the detailed explanation of the position of the UN Special Rapporteur here.

Discussions and reactions from the Olympic Movement are making it very clear that these governmental and political interventions have even strengthened the unity of the Olympic Movement.

All stakeholders made it very clear again: it cannot be up to the governments to decide which athlete can take part in which competitions. This would be the end of international sport as we know it. All the Olympic Movement stakeholders are very concerned about this. The IOC has received a letter signed by the Presidents of all five Continental Associations of NOCs, representing all 206 NOCs, welcoming the IOC recommendations in defence of the autonomy of sport which ensures that “international sports competitions welcome athletes from all countries”.

ASOIF, representing the 33 Summer Olympic International Federations “emphasised the necessity to prevent public authorities’ influence in sport matters”.

The Athletes’ Commissions from Asia and Africa welcomed the recommendations too, and some even wanted the IOC to go further. The situation of athletes from countries and regions affected by the too many wars and conflicts around the world was also raised during the International Athletes’ Forum in October 2023 in Lausanne. It was attended by Athletes’ Commissions members from 181 NOCs, 54 IFs, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), Organising Committees for the upcoming Olympic Games (OCOGs) and
Continental Associations, as well as members of the Athletes’ Declaration Steering Committee and representatives from the World Olympians Association (WOA).

The IOC has of course also seen the reactions from Russia, where the ROC says that: “the parameters and criteria announced for the return of Russians to international competitions are absolutely unacceptable”, and that the “decisions of the IOC Executive Board are nothing more than a farce (...) which grossly violates basic principles of the Olympic Charter and the UN Charter.”

In Russia, even before the publication of the recommendations, the IOC was already called “agents of the United States of America”.

Ukrainian representatives called the IOC recommendations unacceptable, and the IOC is portrayed as “siding with the Russians”, whose invasion the IOC has strongly condemned from the very beginning.

The IOC is also supporting the Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian Olympic Community in an unprecedented way, and this support continues to grow.

The fact that both sides in this confrontation are not satisfied might indicate that the IOC has found some middle ground on which all sides can move forward to make a contribution to understanding and peace.

The entire Olympic Movement strongly stands by its values to unite the world in peaceful competition.

How is the IOC navigating through this complex political situation to avoid the politicisation of sport?

The IOC is here to support the athletes of the entire world to make their Olympic dream come true. The IOC continues to promote the participation of every athlete who accepts the rules, respects the Olympic Charter and has qualified on the field of play.

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

The IOC navigates such an intractable situation through its values, which are its compass. This is why the IOC’s athlete-centred recommendations address its core values of peace, unity, solidarity and non-discrimination.

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

The IOC’s 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, the IOC has 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 the IOC, condemned the war, the international community is not as united when it comes to consequences of this condemnation. The IOC has learnt that 52 governments, representing only 15 per cent of the world population, have, like the IOC, 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.

While the IOC sees very encouraging signs that, overall, its values-based approach is working, the different interests are still trying to pull it in different directions.

There is the Russian side, which considers the strict conditions to be unacceptable, humiliating and discriminatory. The Russian government accuses the IOC of acting against its political neutrality, while at the same time this very same government is shamelessly trying to put together fully politicised sports competitions.

There is the Ukrainian side, which denounces the IOC for siding with Russia. Its government insists on the “total isolation” of all Russians and Belarusians, because it considers 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 from taking part in the recent Special Olympics.

The vast majority of the Olympic Movement stakeholders from across the globe – the athletes, the National Olympic Committees from all five continents, the continental associations and the International Federations: this overwhelming majority is calling on the IOC to continue with its athlete-centred approach to find a pathway – a values-based course of action – that defends the rights of all athletes.

In this time when our autonomy is being undermined by some governments; in this time when some forces want to divide the 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 were to succeed in their efforts to decide which athlete can compete in which competition, then we will end up with sports competitions only among athletes from like-minded political blocs. The Games of Political Bloc A, the Games of Political Bloc B. And probably separate Games for those countries which do not want to align themselves in one way or another.

In such politicised sport, universal Olympic Games will no longer be possible and World Championships, in the true sense of the term, will no longer be possible. This politicisation would be the weaponisation of sport. This goes against everything sport and the Olympic Movement stand for.

How are the IOC’s athlete-centred recommendations for International Federations and international sports event organisers on the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions working?

The overwhelming majority of the world’s athletes respect or support the IOC’s approach. The IOC is encouraged by the many IFS that have organised international sports events and even world championships successfully applying our recommendations.

At the European level, the Individual European Fencing Championships took place in Bulgaria in June. 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 allowed to compete only in those disciplines in which individual neutral athletes did not participate.
At the global level, the World Judo Championships took place in Qatar with the participation of individual neutral athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport. These Championships were very successfully organised.

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

The IOC is also pleased by the success of the inaugural Olympic Esports Week that took place in Singapore, where the IOC recommendations were strictly applied, which enabled players from Ukraine and players with a Russian passport to compete peacefully together.

Contrary to what the naysayers were predicting, none of these competitions collapsed in chaos. All the respective IFs 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 the championships took place without incident. 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 government.

What is the situation of Ukrainian athletes in competitions in which individual, neutral athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport take part?

Many of them would like to qualify for the Olympic Games Paris 2024. In order to qualify, they would need to compete internationally now. Yet, at the judo and taekwondo world championships the Ukrainian athletes were absent, because they had not been allowed to participate, following the instructions of the Ukrainian sports ministry. In other words, 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 its own athletes of 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 teammate cannot compete in discipline B.

In this context, we recall the statement of the Ukrainian Tennis Federation from March 2023, in which it said: “With this appeal, we express a common position regarding the possible decision of the NOC on a complete boycott by the players of all international tournaments where Russians or Belarusians play. Such a decision will lead to the destruction of Ukrainian tennis, because players from these countries take part in almost every competition, and will become a sanction not against the Russians, but against the Ukrainians. If Russians and Belarusians are allowed to compete, you need to play with them and win, and not avoid the battle.”

This is what the entire Olympic community and in fact the entire world are 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 the Ukrainian Olympic community.

The IOC wants to give them this opportunity to qualify and finally participate in the Olympic Games. Therefore, through the respective International Federations, the IOC will support every Ukrainian athlete in their preparation
and participation in any competition that they want to take part in. Athletes who want to compete but would lose the support of their National Sports Federation and their National Olympic Committee because of government interference, can count on the direct support of the Olympic Movement’s Solidarity Fund for the Olympic community of Ukraine and the IOC’s athlete support programmes.

(Amended on 25 October 2023) What impact do the IOC recommendations from 28 March 2023 have on the IOC Members in Russia?

In order to avoid having different standards for the athletes, the national officials and the IOC Members in Russia, the same conditions to participate in the IOC’s international events apply.

The IOC Ethics Commission has noted that two of the conditions mentioned in the IOC Executive Board’s recommendations applied to the IOC Members:

1) their active support for the war; and
2) their contractual situation vis-à-vis the Russian military or national security agencies.

The situation of the IOC Members concerned was assessed from the time of the invasion on 24 February 2022 and subsequently. Considering the second point, the past contractual situation of the Members before the beginning of the war was not be taken into consideration.

This process was completed for all IOC Members in Russia, with the result that the IOC Ethics Commission stated that they comply with the conditions as set out by the IOC EB on 28 March 2023.

Why did the Russian and Belarusian NOCs not receive an invitation for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 when the invitations were sent in July 2023?

The current IOC recommendations for International Federations and international sports event organisers on the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions do not concern the participation of athletes and their support personnel with a Russian or Belarusian passport at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 or the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

The IOC will take this decision at the appropriate time, at its full discretion, and without being bound by the results of previous Olympic qualification competitions.

The invitations to the 203 eligible NOCs were sent on 26 July 2023. For the reasons given, this excluded the NOCs of Russia and Belarus, plus the NOC of Guatemala, which is currently suspended.

What has changed since 28 February 2022 when the IOC Executive Board (EB) recommended no participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials?

The IOC EB took protective measures immediately at the time, with a heavy heart and expressing the dilemma it faced. It was against the mission of the Olympic Games that the IOC had to recommend not to invite athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport because of government interference as governments were starting to decide who can take part in which competition. Some of the governments threatened to withdraw funding if athletes would participate in a certain competition. And this the IOC could not allow, because this is against every principle of the international sports system, which must be based on sport and not on political decisions about who can participate.
There was also the possibility of security risks for Russian or Belarusian athletes participating in competitions due to the very emotional situation in a number of countries.

These were the two reasons for the protective measures; to ensure the security and integrity of competitions and to ensure that qualification to take part in an international competition was based on sporting merit and not on political decisions such as denial of visas or threatening of athletes, National Federations or National Olympic Committees (NOCs).

Firstly, the most important thing that has changed since February 2022 is that participation of neutral athletes with Russian and Belarusian passports in competitions and international competitions has already been implemented and works. This is happening almost every day in a number of sports. It is most prominently evident in tennis, but also in cycling, table tennis, ice hockey, handball, football and in other leagues in the United States, in Europe and elsewhere on other continents. There have been no security incidents in any of those competitions, or none that the IOC is aware of.

Moreover, the governments on whose territory the competitions are taking place are issuing visas with very few exceptions. In other countries they are even issuing working permits where it is necessary, for these players and athletes.

Second, the other major thing that changed was the letter the IOC received from two Special Rapporteurs from the United Nations Human Rights Council, who advised that a blanket ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes would be discriminatory and a flagrant violation of human rights.

One of these two Special Rapporteurs joined the consultation calls that were held with the Olympic Movement stakeholders since December 2022. While the Olympic Movement stakeholders also heard the arguments of another legal scholar with a different legal opinion, the Special Rapporteur – who has been appointed by the UN precisely to give such explanations and advice, and to express such concerns – said: “It is a flagrant violation of human rights. The idea is not that we are going to recognise human rights of people who are like us and with whom we agree on their actions and on their behaviour. The idea is that anyone, anyone has the right not to be discriminated on the basis of their passport.”

“We have to start from agreeing that these states are going to be excluded. The issue is what happens with individuals. It is not a grey area of international law. It is something that binds all states and all individuals. It is actually so important that we call it peremptory norm of international law for this reason, because the blanket prohibition of Russian and fellow Russian athletes and artists cannot continue.”

Legal disputes can occur on any topic, but the Olympic Movement has to rely on these authorities to give interpretations on issues such as human rights.

And this is about the UN Declaration of Human Rights. This is about the UN guiding principles, and the IOC must rely on these Special Rapporteurs. The IOC is not a world court of human rights who can then, with its own authority, take a decision about any legal scholar in this world that is articulating on this very particular issue.

It is about the UN human rights system. And therefore, for the Olympic Movement, these UN Special Rapporteurs must be our guides in these efforts. It is worthwhile recalling some of the comments she made, because she is directly addressing these concerns, which had also been mentioned by legal scholars.

She said that this is an illegal war – the IOC agrees. She went on: “The specific obligations of states continue to exist, and the prohibition of direct discrimination is one of the most important values of the human rights system.”
The IOC has to make sure that it focuses on states. She said: “I think it is absolutely perfect that the IOC and other areas as well have excluded the Russian Federation and Belarus states.”

What exactly are the recommendations from the IOC Executive Board (EB) to International Federations (IFs) and international sports event organisers on the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions?

The IOC EB reiterated that the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 was not considered either in the consultations or in its deliberations on 28 March 2023. The IOC expressly reserves the right to decide about their participation at the appropriate time, even if they would be considered to have qualified according to the qualification criteria set by their respective IFs.

During the consultations with the Olympic Movement stakeholders, which extended over a period of four months since the Olympic Summit held in December 2022, the vast majority of the stakeholders were clear that they wanted a pathway to be opened for the competitions under their sole authority.

They requested from the IOC recommendations in order to harmonise their approach, in the event that they decide to admit athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport to their competitions. The IOC strongly recommends taking such a decision only with the provision that it can be revoked at the discretion of the IF concerned.

Following this request, the IOC EB issued the following recommendations (on 28 March 2023) to IFs and international sports event organisers:

1. Athletes with a Russian or a Belarusian passport must compete only as Individual Neutral Athletes.

2. Teams of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport cannot be considered.

3. Athletes who actively support the war cannot compete. Support personnel who actively support the war cannot be entered.

4. Athletes who are contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military or national security agencies cannot compete. Support personnel who are contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military or national security agencies cannot be entered.

5. Any such Individual Neutral Athlete, like all the other participating athletes, must meet all anti-doping requirements applicable to them, and particularly those set out in the anti-doping rules of the IFs.

6. The sanctions against those responsible for the war, the Russian and Belarusian states and governments, must remain in place:
   a. No international sports events organised or supported by an IF or NOC in Russia or Belarus.
   b. No flag, anthem, colours or any other identifications whatsoever of these countries displayed at any sports event or meeting, including the entire venue.
   c. No Russian and Belarusian government or state official can be invited to or accredited for any international sports event or meeting.
The IOC EB confirmed that these recommendations do not concern the participation of athletes and their support personnel with a Russian or Belarusian passport at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 or the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026. The IOC will take this decision at the appropriate time, at its full discretion, and without being bound by the results of previous Olympic qualification competitions.

Throughout the application of the exemptions by the IFs, the IOC will closely monitor the full implementation of these recommendations by all parties concerned. The results of this monitoring procedure will be an important factor in the decision by the IOC concerning the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

Please find here the full press release issued on 28 March 2023.

Some are saying the IOC is pushing the responsibility to the IFs instead of taking it on itself. What is your answer to that?

There is no other option, given how international sport is structured and run. The international competition outside the Olympic Games are under the sole, autonomous authority of the International Federations, who decide on the rules of these competitions and the eligibility of the athletes taking part in these decisions.

What did the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights say during the consultation calls with Olympic Movement stakeholders held prior to the IOC Executive Board meeting?

The Special Rapporteur spoke with the athletes’ representatives in their call on 24 March 2023. She also addressed the IOC Members, NOCs and IFs in their consultation calls. In her remarks she considered the legal arguments provided by the NOCs of Ukraine and Germany. Please find here the transcript of the introduction to her remarks.

What are the criteria for establishing if a Russian or Belarusian athlete or support personnel has not actively supported the war?

As stated in the recommended conditions of participation document, only those Individual Neutral Athletes and support personnel who have not acted against the peace mission of the Olympic Movement by actively supporting the war in Ukraine may be invited to participate in international sports competitions.

Contracted members of the Russian and Belarusian military or national security agencies are considered to support the war.

With regard to other active supporting measures, all relevant circumstances, in particular public statements, including those made on social media; participation in pro-war demonstrations or events; and the displaying of any symbol supporting the war in Ukraine, for example, the “Z” symbol, have to be taken into consideration.

In order to ensure a harmonised interpretation of these criteria, the IFs should consider creating a single independent panel under the umbrella of the IF associations (ASOIF, AIOWF and ARISF) to take the decisions.
These recommendations to the International Federations (IFs) were issued by the IOC on 28 March 2023, following a request by the 11th Olympic Summit on 9 December 2022, which brought together the leaders of the stakeholder groups of the Olympic Movement.

They had asked the IOC to explore a pathway for athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport to return to international competitions as Individual Neutral Athletes.

The recommendations issued by the IOC provide conditions should individual federations decide to take up such a pathway in their own sports, over which they have sole authority.

The IOC cannot decide on the eligibility rules in each sport.

It is now up to the IFs, under their sole authority, to decide whether they want to take up such a pathway. The IOC’s recommendations are only on how this could be done.

The IOC recommendations say that teams of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport cannot be considered. What constitutes a team sport or event?

The definition of team sports or team events follows the respective IF regulations.

What will happen in the case of athletes from Russia and Belarus who have already missed out on qualification?

Some qualification events in several sports have already taken place. The IOC will not ask IFs to adapt their qualification systems retroactively to allocate additional quota to athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport that have missed out on qualification opportunities due to the war.

What will the IOC’s stance be on IFs that choose to ignore or defy the recommendations, such as World Athletics?

These recommendations to the International Federations (IFs) were issued by the IOC on 28 March 2023, following a request by the 11th Olympic Summit on 9 December 2022, which brought together the leaders of the stakeholder groups of the Olympic Movement.

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It is now up to the IFs under their sole authority, to decide whether they want to take up such a pathway. The IOC’s recommendations are only on how this could be done.
What does the IOC recommend in cases where a government or state official has also been appointed or elected to a post within the Russian or Belarusian sports movement?

As said in the recommendations: “The sanctions against those responsible for the war, the Russian and Belarusian states and governments, must remain in place, including that no Russian and Belarusian government or state official can be invited to or accredited for any international sports event or meeting.” This is self-explanatory with regard to government officials.

What do you say to people who take the position that the IOC, if it does not agree to everything Ukraine is calling for, is complicit with Russia?

Carrying out its mission to unite the world in sporting competition and following the Olympic Charter does not make the IOC complicit with Russia. It is possible to stand in solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian Olympic community without agreeing to everything they are calling for. Just a few hours after the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which was supported by Belarus, the IOC was one of the first international organisations to strongly condemn the invasion. In contrast to most other global organisations, it also sanctioned the states and governments responsible.

To date, the IOC has been supporting around 3,000 Ukrainian athletes so that they can continue practising sport. This support was recently reinforced, in order to have a strong team from the NOC of Ukraine at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026. NOCs, IFs and sports event organisers were and are being encouraged to undertake all possible efforts to facilitate Ukrainian athletes’ training and preparation for, and participation in, international sports events.

The IOC stands steadfast with the Ukrainian Olympic community.

There have been precedents in the past when you have excluded complete teams from the Olympic Games, like South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, or Germany and others after World War I and World War II.

The procedure to invite NOCs to the Olympic Games has changed significantly over the years. Until the Olympic Games in 1984, the invitations were issued by the Organising Committee of the host country. Since 1999, the NOCs have had an obligation to take part in the Games of the Olympiad (Summer Games). This change to the Olympic Charter was made in order to address the historic situation of political boycotts and to avoid their repetition. The exclusion of South Africa was based on UN sanctions and the fact that apartheid was also practised in South African sport. These UN sanctions applied to all walks of life. The IOC followed the United Nations with this decision. The same was true when the former Yugoslavia was under UN sanctions at the time of the Olympic Games Barcelona 1992. The UN sanctions called on all Member States to: “Take the necessary steps to prevent the participation in sporting events on their territory of persons or groups representing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.” However, even under this UN sanctions regime, the participation of “independent athletes” was eventually allowed at the Olympic Games Barcelona 1992 and agreed with the UN.

Currently, there are no UN sanctions in place against Russia or Belarus. The IOC always respects UN sanctions, including now. Because of such sanctions we are currently unable to support athletes from a number of NOCs.

After World War I and World War II, some countries were not invited to the Olympic Games by the Organising Committee of the host country:
In the wake of World War I, Germany, Austria, Türkiye, Bulgaria and Hungary were not invited to take part in the Olympic Games Antwerp 1920, and Germany also for the Olympic Games Paris 1924. At that time, the invitations to the Olympic Games were still issued by the Organising Committees, not the IOC.

As for the Olympic Games London 1948, Japan and Germany were not invited in the aftermath of World War II. The 1946 edition of the Olympic Charter stipulated that invitations to take part in the Olympic Games are sent out by the Organising Committee to all countries in general, and in the first place to those who have established National Olympic Committees. In the IOC Bulletin in 1947, it was mentioned that the Japanese and German NOCs were not recognised by the IOC, which explains why those delegations were not invited.

**What is your comment about Ukrainian officials accusing the IOC of being a “promoter of war, murder and destruction”?**

The IOC rejects in the strongest possible terms defamatory statements of this kind made by some Ukrainian officials. They are totally unacceptable and cannot serve as a basis for any constructive discussion.

The IOC is one of very few, if any, global organisations which issued sanctions. Currently, there are no UN sanctions in place against Russia or Belarus. There is no sanction from the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc. We made our position very clear, in not only condemning the war but also sanctioning the Russian and Belarusian states.

**A number of Ukrainian athletes have died in this war already, how do you comment on that?**

The IOC is deeply saddened to hear of the death of members of the Olympic Community in Ukraine who have lost their lives in this war. The IOC extends its most sincere condolences to their families and friends and the Ukrainian people.

The IOC took a very strong stance against the war, strongly condemning it, issuing sanctions against the Russian and Belarusian States and Governments hours after it started on 24 February 2022. The IOC firmly stands with this crystal clear position. And this position is guided by the solidarity with the Olympic Community of Ukraine, which the Olympic Movement has supported since the very beginning of the war and will continue to do so.

**What did the IOC say on the occasion of the one year-on mark of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which was supported by Belarus?**

24 February 2023 marks one year since Russia invaded Ukraine with the support of Belarus: one year of brutal warfare, human suffering, killing and destruction. We feel deeply for the Ukrainian people during this cruel war, whose pain and suffering are beyond imagination. On this grim anniversary, the Olympic Movement joins calls for peace and stands ready to make its modest contribution to any peace-building efforts.

The IOC condemned the senseless war in the strongest terms on the day of the invasion. With no end in sight to the fighting after one year of bloodshed, the IOC reiterates its condemnation of the war in Ukraine, which is a blatant violation of the Olympic Truce that was in effect at the time, and the Olympic Charter. For this reason, the IOC sanctioned the Russian and Belarusian states and governments, who are solely responsible for this war, in an unprecedented way: no international sports events organised in Russia and Belarus; no flag, anthems or other national symbols whatsoever displayed; and no government or state officials accredited for any international sports events.
These sanctions were put in place in February 2022 and were then reinforced, further strengthened and confirmed by the recent Olympic Summit on 9 December 2022. They remain firmly in place.

At the same time, the IOC reaffirms its unwavering solidarity with the Ukrainian athletes, who have faced unspeakable hardship day after day. With the war now raging for over a year, the entire Olympic Movement remains steadfast in its commitment to help the Ukrainian athletes in every way possible, because we all want to see a strong team from the National Olympic Committee of Ukraine at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026. To this end, the IOC has tripled its Solidarity Fund for Ukraine so that the athletes have every support to overcome the tremendous challenges they are facing to make their Olympic dream come true. Some 3,000 athletes have already benefitted from the help the IOC Solidarity Fund is offering through the NOC of Ukraine. These efforts take the form not just of financial aid, but also logistical support and ensuring that Ukrainian athletes can continue to take part in competitions by providing travel support, training facilities, accommodation, equipment and uniforms, amongst other things.

From the very beginning, starting with the ancient Olympic Games, our mission has always been to promote peace through sport. The IOC remains committed to this mission to unite the entire world in peaceful competition to this day. The most recent examples of such peaceful competition include athletes from South and North Korea, from Israel and Palestine, from Armenia and Azerbaijan and many others. During the Olympic Games, athletes from 206 different National Olympic Committees live together in peace in the Olympic Village. Peace-building efforts need dialogue. A competition with athletes who respect the Olympic Charter can serve as a catalyst for dialogue, which is always a first step to achieving peace.

The Olympic Games cannot prevent wars and conflicts. Nor can they address all the political and social challenges in our world. This is the realm of politics. But the Olympic Games can set an example for a world where everyone respects the same rules and one another. They can inspire us to solve problems by building bridges, leading to better understanding among people. They can open the door to dialogue and peace-building in ways that exclusion and division do not.

The overwhelming majority of the Olympic Movement, including the athletes, National Olympic Committees and International Federations, support the unwavering solidarity with Ukraine, the sanctions imposed on Russia and Belarus and the peace-building, unifying mission of the Olympic Movement.

United in this Olympic spirit, on this painful one-year mark, the entire Olympic Movement reiterates the call we made one year ago to all the political leaders of the world: “Give Peace a Chance.”

**What if some athletes express their viewson the field of play?**

Rule 50.2 of the [Olympic Charter](#) and its [Guidelines](#) apply to all Olympic Games participants. As outlined in the applicable Guidelines, athlete expressions are not permitted in the following instances:

- During official ceremonies (including Olympic medal ceremonies, opening and closing ceremonies)
- During competition on the field of play
- In the Olympic Village.

**What if some athletes refuse to compete against Russian or Belarusian athletes?**

The participation of neutral athletes with Russian and Belarusian passports in competitions and international competitions has already been implemented. This is happening almost every day in a number of sports. It is most
prominently evident in tennis, but also in cycling, table tennis, ice hockey, handball, football and in other leagues in the United States, in Europe and elsewhere on other continents.

We expect that all NOCs and their athletes participating at the Olympic Games will comply fully with the Olympic Charter.

**Are athletes with a Russian or Belarussian passport subject to doping tests right now?**

Any Individual Neutral Athlete, like all the other participating athletes, must meet all anti-doping requirements applicable to them, particularly those set out in the anti-doping rules of the IFs. Each IF is responsible for the individual checks of any athlete prior to their participation in competitions under its authority.

It is recommended that IFs strongly consider including all Individual Neutral Athletes in their registered testing pool.

In addition, each IF should communicate details of its overall doping control programme to all participants, respecting confidentiality and personal data requirements, in order to ensure a level playing field and fair treatment for all athletes.

The President of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) informed the Olympic Summit last December that 31,112 anti-doping tests had been conducted in-and out-of-competition on Russian athletes between 1 January 2021 and December 2022. These tests have been coordinated by different entities under their respective authority, and all samples have been and continue to be analysed in WADA-accredited laboratories outside Russia. The programme continues.

**Since the doping scandal, there is a commonly held perception that the IOC is siding with Russia. What can you say on that?**

In all its decisions, the IOC is following the World Anti-Doping Code and the Olympic Charter, and is trying to uphold individual justice to the best possible extent in line with human rights principles.

With regard to the systemic doping scheme in Russia around the Olympic Winter Games Sochi 2014, the IOC issued the toughest sanction available by excluding the Russian Olympic Committee from participation at PyeongChang 2018, and imposing a USD 15 million fine.

The subsequent violations of the World Anti-Doping Code were under the sole authority of the World Anti-Doping Agency, which had to experience that its sanctions have been weakened by a judgement of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). At the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022, both the IOC and WADA requested that the decision by the Disciplinary Anti-Doping Committee of RUSADA to lift the provisional suspension in respect of the then 15-year old Russian figure skater be set aside, but such requests were rejected by the CAS.

Given this history of doping in Russia, the IOC has in the ongoing discussion established strict anti-doping conditions for each individual athlete with a Russian or Belarussian passport who would want to compete as a neutral athlete.

**What decision did the IOC take in February 2022 and why?**
In February 2022, the IOC and the Olympic Movement reacted immediately after Russia, supported by Belarus, started the war in Ukraine. The IOC issued three statements:

- **24 February 2022**: IOC strongly condemns the breach of the Olympic Truce.
- **25 February 2022**: IOC EB urges all International Federations to relocate or cancel their sports events currently planned in Russia or Belarus.
- **28 February 2022**: IOC EB recommends no participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials.

Our actions were two-fold: sanctions on the one hand and protective measures on the other. The IOC condemned the blatant violation of the Olympic Truce on the day of the invasion. The IOC sanctioned the Russian and Belarusian states and governments responsible for this war. At the same time, the IOC also had to take protective measures to ensure the integrity of international competitions and the security of athletes and officials, including that of Russian and Belarusian athletes.

The situation was that governments were deciding who could take part in international competitions in different ways. There were governments who prohibited athletes from their country to take part in any competition with Russian or Belarusian athletes. There were other governments who were threatening to withdraw funding from any athlete who would participate in such a competition. There were also governments who were putting public and political pressure on National Olympic Committees and national sports federations.

This situation put the IOC and the International Federations in an unsolvable dilemma. The IOC had to realise that its mission to unite the entire world in a peaceful competition could no longer be fulfilled. For this reason, the IOC had to recommend not to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials to take part in international competitions, or to at least prohibit any identification of their nationality.

These recommendations were welcomed and followed by the Olympic Movement.

**What did the Olympic Summit on 9 December 2022 say?**

At the invitation of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the leading representatives of the Olympic Movement met today (9 December 2022) for the 11th Olympic Summit, which was held in person.

Chaired by the IOC President, the Olympic Summit involves the leading representatives of the Olympic Movement. It forms part of the ongoing dialogue and consultation on subjects of significance for the future of the Olympic Movement.

**STATE OF THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT**

The Olympic Summit analysed in detail the impact of the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The vast majority of the participants agreed that the sanctions against the Russian and Belarusian states and governments, as those responsible for this blatant breach of the Olympic Truce and the Olympic Charter, must remain firmly in place. These sanctions include:

- No international sports events being organised or supported by an International Federation (IF) or National Olympic Committee (NOC) in Russia or Belarus.
- No flag, anthem, colours or any other identifications of these countries being displayed at any sports event or meeting. As a reminder, the sanctions also include the unprecedented decision by the IOC to withdraw the Olympic Orders from the President of the Russian Federation and from the Deputy Prime Minister.
The Summit also concluded that the solidarity efforts of all the stakeholders of the Olympic Movement – under the leadership of the IOC – for the Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian Olympic community, as committed by the IOC President during his visit to Kyiv to the Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian President, will continue with full force in order to have a strong team from the NOC of Ukraine at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

There followed an intense debate about the participation of athletes from Russia and Belarus in international competitions. The Olympic Movement had to take the protective measures of not inviting athletes from these NOCs because, on the one hand, some governments were deciding and still decide which athletes can participate in international competitions, and which athletes cannot. The Summit strongly rejected these measures by governments as unacceptable interference in the autonomy of sports organisations and their political neutrality. The Summit emphasised that participation in sports competitions must be based exclusively on the sporting merits of an athlete and respect for the rules of sport. Another reason for the protective measures was that, in some countries, the safety and security of athletes from Russia and Belarus could not be guaranteed anymore.

These protective measures put the Olympic Movement in a grave dilemma. All athletes had to be protected from political interference. The integrity of sports competitions had to be ensured. This led the IOC to act against its mission to unify the entire world in peaceful competition, since it had to prohibit athletes from participation because of their passport only.

The participants of the Summit discussed in detail whether the reasons for these protective measures still exist and explored different ways as to how to overcome this extremely grave dilemma. This debate was informed by:

- The adoption of the “Sport as an enabler of sustainable development” resolution (A/77/L.28) by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 1 December 2022 in New York. This resolution recognised that major international sports events “should be organised in the spirit of peace” and “that the unifying and conciliative nature of such events should be respected”. It also supports the political neutrality of the Olympic Movement and “the independence and autonomy of sport as well as the mission of the International Olympic Committee in leading the Olympic Movement”.

- The resolution was passed by consensus by all members of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, which is remarkable, as this includes Russia and Ukraine.

- Remarks by Csaba Kőrösi, President of the 77th Session of the UNGA, who said: “I encourage all Member States to preserve the unifying spirit of sports and the Olympic Movement. It is far more promising to the world if nations compete on the fields of sports than on the battle fields. The former makes us more noble and stronger, the latter leaves death and devastation behind.”

- The statement by the Chair of the G20, Indonesia’s President Joko Widodo – following an address by the IOC President – in which the Indonesian President expressed his support for the political neutrality of sport, while at the same time emphasising the unifying power of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

- The statement by Emmanuel Macron, President of France – the host of the next Olympic and Paralympic Games – who said: “Sport should not be politicised. These major events are meant to allow athletes from all countries, sometimes including countries at war, to bring sport to life. Also, to find, through sport, ways of discussing where people can no longer talk to each other – I think that should be preserved.”

- A letter by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance of the United Nations Human Rights Council. They express “serious concern about the recommendation to ban Russian and Belarusian
athletes and officials such as judges from international competitions, based solely on their nationality, as a matter of principle. This raises serious issues of non-discrimination.”

- The participation of many athletes from Russia and Belarus in national leagues abroad, and in different international sports competitions, including in cycling and tennis.

- The encouragement and expectation expressed by so many leaders and people from Asia, Africa, the Americas, Oceania and parts of Europe who consider sport to be a unifying force of major importance in these divisive and highly confrontational times. Many of them refer to this peace mission of the Olympic Movement, which was put into action most recently at the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 by unifying the teams of the NOCs of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in a joint march at the Opening Ceremony behind the Korean Unification Flag, while their countries were and still are in a state of war.

In the course of the debate, the Acting President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) stated that, on the Asian continent, the reasons for the protective measures no longer exist. The OCA offered to facilitate the participation of athletes from Russia and Belarus in competitions in Asia under its authority, while respecting the sanctions in place. Representatives from the IFs welcomed this initiative, stating that, for some IFs and for hosts of their competitions, the same reasoning would apply, and that therefore there should not be a one-size-fits-all solution, but that each IF should carefully evaluate for its sport whether the reasons for the protective measures still exist.

The President of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) welcomed the OCA initiative as a major step to re-establish the unity of all 206 National Olympic Committees.

The Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission (AC) said that the IOC AC represents athletes from all 206 NOCs and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team, which was reflected in the Commission’s discussions. In this context, the IOC AC welcomes the exploration of the initiative as a way to live up to the Olympic mission to unite athletes from all around the world in peaceful competition, while noting that there are different views among the athlete community.

The other representatives present, including the European Olympic Committees (EOC) President and the President of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa, supported the views expressed.

The President of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) informed the Summit that 31,112 tests had been conducted in- and out-of-competition on Russian athletes between 1 January 2021 to date. These tests have been coordinated by different entities under their respective authority, and all samples have been and continue to be analysed in WADA-accredited laboratories outside Russia.

The IOC President thanked all the participants for the open, frank and constructive debate. In particular, he thanked the OCA for its creative initiative and proposed the following conclusions to be issued by the Olympic Summit:

I. The vast majority of the Olympic Summit participants confirm:

1. That the sanctions against the Russian and Belarusian states and governments remain firmly in place;

2. they also confirmed the full commitment to solidarity with the Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian Olympic community in order to have a strong team from the NOC of Ukraine at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.
II. The Summit unanimously agreed the following:

1. The IOC to lead the further exploration of the OCA initiative concerning the participation of athletes who are in full respect of the Olympic Charter and the sanctions. This initiative to be discussed in the next round of IOC consultation calls with the IOC Members, the athletes’ representatives, the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees.

2. The IOC Executive Board to take today’s discussion and the following comprehensive consultations fully into account when reviewing the protective measures concerning athletes’ participation in competitions.

3. All the participants of the Olympic Summit to commit to follow these reviewed recommendations in order to ensure the unity of the Olympic Movement in its pursuit of its unifying peace mission.

What was the content of the IOC Statement on solidarity with Ukraine, sanctions against Russia and Belarus, and the status of athletes from these countries issued on 25 January 2023?

The Executive Board (EB) of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) met today (25 January 2023) to consider the unanimous conclusions of the Olympic Summit (9 December 2022), which comprises the leaders of all the stakeholder groups of the Olympic Movement and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Following this Summit, consultation calls were held with the IOC Members, the global network of athletes’ representatives, the International Federations (IFs) and the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) on 17 and 19 January 2023.

The discussions had three parts: first, the sanctions against the Russian and Belarusian State and Government; second, the solidarity of the Olympic Movement with the Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian Olympic community; third, the possible access to sports competitions for individual athletes with Russian or Belarusian passports.

1. With regard to the sanctions, participants in each of the consultation calls unanimously reaffirmed and called for a reinforcement of the sanctions already in place:

   a. No international sports events being organised or supported by an IF or NOC in Russia or Belarus.

   b. No flag, anthem, colours or any other identifications whatsoever of these countries being displayed at any sports event or meeting, including the entire venue.

   c. No Russian and Belarusian Government or State official should be invited to or accredited for any international sports event or meeting.

2. With regard to the solidarity with Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian Olympic community, there was also unanimous support to:

   a. Continue and even strengthen the full and unwavering commitment to solidarity with the Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian Olympic community in order to have a strong team from the NOC of Ukraine at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

   b. Encourage all IFs, NOCs and sports event organisers to undertake all possible efforts to facilitate the training, preparation and participation of Ukrainian athletes in international sports events.
3. With regard to the individual athletes with Russian or Belarusian passports, the vast majority of the participants in each of the consultation calls expressed the following:

   a. Strong commitment to the unifying mission of the Olympic Movement, requesting and encouraging it to live up to this unifying mission, particularly in these times of division, confrontation and war.

   b. Respect the rights of all athletes to be treated without any discrimination, in accordance with the Olympic Charter. Governments must not decide which athletes can participate in which competition and which athletes cannot.

   c. No athlete should be prevented from competing just because of their passport.

   d. A pathway for athletes’ participation in competition under strict conditions should therefore be further explored.

   e. Such strict conditions being:

      i. athletes would participate in competitions as “neutral athletes” and in no way represent their state or any other organisation in their country, as is already happening in professional leagues, particularly in Europe, the United States and Canada, and in some individual professional sports.

      ii. only athletes who fully respect the Olympic Charter would participate. This means in particular: first, only those who have not acted against the peace mission of the IOC by actively supporting the war in Ukraine could compete. Second, only athletes who fully comply with the World Anti-Doping Code and all relevant anti-doping rules and regulations would be eligible. There must be individual checks carried out for all entered athletes.

   f. In the event of any athlete failing to respect the eligibility criteria or failing to respect the strict participation conditions as set out above, the IF and/or the sports event organiser concerned should immediately remove them from the competition, suspend them from further competitions and report the incident to the IOC for its consideration for further measures and sanctions.

   g. Welcomed and appreciated the offer from the Olympic Council of Asia to give these athletes access to Asian competitions.

The vast majority in each of the consultation meetings requested the IOC to continue the exploration of the above-mentioned concept by way of bilateral consultation, with each International Federation being the sole authority for its international competitions.

The participants’ deliberations were informed by a number of documents, including but not limited to the following:

The letter from the Special Rapporteurs states: “We express serious concern, however, about the recommendation to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials such as judges from international competitions, based solely on their nationality, as a matter of principle. This raises serious issues of non-discrimination.”

2. The UN General Assembly resolution A/77/L.28: “Sport as an enabler of sustainable development” adopted by consensus by all UN Member States on 1 December 2022, including Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

- The Resolution recognised that major international sports events “should be organised in the spirit of peace” and that “the unifying and conciliative nature of such events should be respected”.

- It also supported the political neutrality of the Olympic Movement and “the independence and autonomy of sport as well as the mission of the International Olympic Committee in leading the Olympic Movement”.

- Opening the debate in the UN General Assembly, the President of the 77th Session of the UNGA said: “I encourage all Member States to preserve the unifying spirit of sports and the Olympic Movement. It is far more promising to the world if nations compete on the field of sports than on the battlefields. The former makes us more noble and stronger, the latter leaves death and devastation behind.”

3. Reference was made to the situation regarding the participation of individual athletes from the former Yugoslavia at the Olympic Games Barcelona 1992.

- At the time – contrary to the situation today – there were United Nations sanctions in place against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, calling on all Member States to: “Take the necessary steps to prevent the participation in sporting events on their territory of persons or groups representing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.” However, even under this UN sanction regime, the participation of “independent athletes” was allowed at the Olympic Games Barcelona 1992.