



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

To all International Sports Federations

Lausanne, 19 November 2018

Participation of sporting delegations and athletes in international sports events – principle of autonomy and non-discrimination

Dear President,
Dear Secretary General,

The IOC has been working together with the International Federations, and the umbrella organisations concerned, for many years to protect the fundamental principles which govern the Olympic Movement and make sure that, when a national sports organisation/country decides to bid for, and host, an international sports event, it equally abides by the rules of the Olympic Movement and must guarantee that all athletes and sporting delegations eligible to come and participate, as determined by the international sports organisation concerned, can do so, without any undue discrimination or political interference from the host country.

In this context, it is requested that when sporting delegations come from a country/territory that is not recognised by the host country, specific practical measures are taken by the local organiser/host country to secure the participation of these athletes and sporting delegations under the same conditions as any other participating delegation. Of course, this is without prejudice to the political position of the host country vis-à-vis the country/territory in question and does not imply any form of recognition of the country/territory in question by the host country, which is a separate matter over which the Olympic Movement has no jurisdiction. The international sports organisations recognise sports organisations only and do not interfere with the recognition of countries.

It is the duty of all our international sports organisations to protect the athletes' interests and their right to compete, beyond any political consideration, as well as the fairness and integrity of the sports competitions, and to act or react accordingly when these fundamental values and principles are violated for political reasons. These issues have been regularly addressed at the recent Olympic Summits and in the latest GAISF meeting in Bangkok, during which the IOC spoke of a "zero-tolerance policy" in these circumstances.

There have been numerous examples in the recent past of issues related to the above, which were resolved smoothly and successfully thanks to a joint approach and close collaboration between the IOC, the IF, the local organiser/authorities and the NOC concerned. The most recent example is in Spain, where sporting delegations from Kosovo have encountered recurrent difficulties with regard their participation in several international sports events held recently in Spain, under the same conditions as any other participating delegations and athletes.

The Spanish Government has now provided a clear undertaking to "*guarantee the participation of Kosovan athletes in sporting events organised in Spain under the auspices of the IOC, as was the case for the Mediterranean Games in Tarragona. That is, to facilitate the issuance of visas for the Kosovan participants and allow the use of their national symbols, flag and anthem in accordance with Olympic protocol. In short, to ensure that these athletes can participate on equal terms with others.*" Please find attached, for your reference, a copy of the self-explanatory letter dated 13 November 2018 received from the Spanish Government in this regard.

The above clearly covers any international sports event organised by any IOC-recognised international sports federation/organisation (including its affiliated continental/regional bodies), as they are placed under the auspices of the IOC in accordance with the Olympic Charter. Consequently, before allocating to Spain any future events in which your national federation in Kosovo (if any) or any other national federation from countries/territories which are not recognised by Spain (if any) are due to participate, you may now refer to the attached letter from the Spanish Government to request a specific written confirmation from the local organiser/authorities/your Spanish federation that this general commitment (attached) will be fully implemented for your specific event, and that the teams/athletes from Kosovo and/or other countries/territories in a similar situation vis-à-vis Spain will be able to participate in this specific event under the usual protocol and under the same conditions as any other participating team/athletes. We take this opportunity to reiterate our thanks to the Spanish authorities for their clear undertaking to protect the athletes' participation in accordance with the values and principles of the Olympic Movement.

Unfortunately, there are also a few examples which could not be resolved successfully and in which sporting delegations were prevented by the host country from participating in an international sporting event organised by an International Federation. The latest incident occurred in India, where the sporting delegation and athletes from Kosovo were not allowed to come and participate in a world boxing championship (this year and last year). This shows clearly that, until this matter is seriously addressed and resolved by the competent Indian authorities, India is not in a position to host international sporting events in which a sporting delegation from Kosovo is due to take part.

In view of all of the above, the IOC strongly recommends that before allocating any international sports events to a country, all international sports organisations concerned make sure that all the necessary written guarantees are obtained from the local authorities/organiser to ensure equal treatment for the participating athletes and sporting delegations, in accordance with the basic principles of autonomy and non-discrimination which govern the Olympic Movement. Should this not be possible, or should there be any doubt, said country would exclude itself from the right to host international sporting events, and the international sports organisation concerned should not allocate any international sports event to this country until the issue is resolved and all the necessary guarantees are provided and implemented.

Thank you for your valuable collaboration, and we remain fully at your disposal should you have any questions, or should you need any specific assistance to address these fundamental matters for the Olympic Movement.

Yours sincerely,



Pere MIRÓ
IOC Deputy Director General



Kit McCONNELL
IOC Sports Director

Cc:

- IOC President
- ASOIF & AIOWF Presidents
- GAISF Sr. Vice President & ARISF President
- ANOC and all Continental Associations of NOCs
- Comité Olímpico Español
- Indian Olympic Association
- Kosovo Olympic Committee