



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

Mr Vadym Guttsait
President
National Olympic Committee of
Ukraine
39/41 Khoryva Street
Kyiv 04071
Ukraine

Lausanne, 31 January 2023

Dear President,

Thank you for your letter from 26 January 2023.

Let me reiterate the unanimous support of the Olympic Movement for the Ukrainian athletes. In all the consultation calls, the unwavering commitment to solidarity with the Ukrainian Olympic community was made crystal clear. The Ukrainian athletes can continue to count on the full solidarity from the entire Olympic Movement. We all want to see a strong team from the NOC of Ukraine at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and at the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026. As your athletes and yourself could experience during the last 12 months, this solidarity with the Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian Olympic community was unprecedented and overwhelming, with the contribution of all the stakeholders of the Olympic Movement. We all feel the pain and suffering of the Ukrainian people in this cruel war.

Therefore, all the participants in all of the consultation calls unanimously reaffirmed the sanctions already in place against the Russian and Belarusian States and Governments and called for them to be strengthened. This applies in particular to the fact that no national identification whatsoever of Russia or Belarus be displayed at any sports event or meeting.

With regard to your comments concerning the IOC Executive Board Statement on solidarity with Ukraine, sanctions against Russia and Belarus, and the status of athletes from these countries, you know that this statement was supported by the vast majority of stakeholders of the Olympic Movement.

The participants have reiterated their commitment to the Olympic Charter and the unifying mission of the Olympic Movement. The values enshrine the raison d'être of our Olympic Movement: to unite the entire world in peaceful competition.

All NOCs are following these principles, including those, like you, whose athletes are impacted by conflicts and wars in their territory. Despite the immeasurable human suffering caused by the far too many wars around the world today, none of these NOCs are questioning their commitment to the Olympic principles and to the unifying mission of the Olympic Movement. These other NOCs impacted by conflicts and wars never put the participation of their athletes in international sport competitions into question.

As you joined the consultation call with your fellow NOCs, you will remember that the IOC Executive Board Statement enjoys the overwhelming support of NOCs, including that of all the five Continental Associations as well as of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), representing all 206 National Olympic Committees.

Threatening a boycott of the Olympic Games, which, as you inform me, the NOC of Ukraine is currently considering, goes against the fundamentals of the Olympic Movement and the principles we stand for. In this respect, the NOC of Ukraine certainly does not enjoy the support or solidarity of the vast majority of stakeholders of the Olympic Movement. And as history has shown, previous boycotts did not achieve their political ends and only served to punish the athletes of the boycotting NOCs.

As you know, the participation of neutral athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 has not even been discussed in concrete terms yet. Therefore, your letter at this premature stage to your fellow NOCs, to the International Federations, IOC Members and to future Olympic hosts, pressuring them in an attempt to publicly influence their decision-making, has been perceived by the vast majority of them as, at the very least, extremely regrettable.

It is the responsibility of every NOC and of any member of an NOC to uphold the fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter and the autonomy of the Olympic Movement. A boycott is a violation of the Olympic Charter, which obliges all NOCs to “participate in the Games of the Olympiad by sending athletes”.

It is important to note that the concept under discussion is in line with what we have seen for instance during the last two weeks at the Australian Tennis Open, in which Ukrainian athletes participated. Athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport also took part in the tournament as neutral athletes without any identification of their country. We all remember the historic match in the first round when an Ukrainian player competed against a neutral player with a Russian passport. In fact, an individual neutral athlete from Belarus won the championship.

Our established strict conditions already made it very clear from the outset that no Russian or Belarusian flags, national symbols, or signs supporting the war can be displayed neither inside the stadium nor in the competition grounds. No athlete from these countries supporting the war should be eligible for any competition. No Russian and Belarusian Government or State official should be invited to or accredited for any international sports event or meeting.

There is widespread support from the international community for our unifying Olympic mission. In this respect, the recent adoption of resolution A/77/L.28 by the United Nations General Assembly on the 1st of December 2022 stands out. This resolution recognises that “major international sports events should be organised in the spirit of peace, mutual understanding and international cooperation, friendship and tolerance, and without discrimination of any kind, and that the unifying and conciliative nature of such events should be respected”. The resolution specifically is “acknowledging the Olympic Charter, and that any form of discrimination is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic movement”. This resolution was passed by consensus by all UN Member States, including the Government of Ukraine.

In the context of non-discrimination, two special rapporteurs of the UN Human Rights Council have raised serious concerns: “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.” All of us in the Olympic Movement have to address this.

These two reasons – the UN resolution and concerns about discrimination – were a major motivation for the Olympic Summit and the following consultation calls. In this context, we reject in the strongest possible terms defamatory statements made by some Ukrainian officials, accusing the IOC to be a “promoter of war, murder and destruction”. Such remarks cannot serve as a basis for any constructive discussion.

The entire Olympic Movement empathises with the Ukrainian athletes who are suffering from so much hardship during this senseless war. We are fully committed to support them to overcome the tremendous challenges to make their Olympic dream come true. This is why the IOC is reiterating its invitation to you in your new capacity as President of the National Olympic Committee of Ukraine to discuss the next steps of our solidarity efforts.

In order to ensure the same level of information for all the participants in your upcoming General Assembly and the entire Ukrainian Olympic community, I request that you distribute this letter as well as the full IOC Executive Board Statement to all of them.

Since you chose to send your correspondence to all NOCs, IFs and beyond, you will understand that we will also be copying stakeholders of the Olympic Movement on this letter, so that they have the full picture.

In the Olympic spirit of peace and solidarity, which was so evident in all our consultation calls, let us work together for the sake of the Ukrainian athletes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Volodymyr A. L." with a stylized flourish at the end.