



April 11, 2023

International Olympic Committee  
President Thomas Bach

Dear President Thomas Bach,

**RE: Open letter to the International Olympic Committee from the International Orienteering Federation on solidarity with Ukraine, sanctions against Russia and Belarus, and the status of athletes from these countries**

On behalf of the International Orienteering Federation (IOF), we would like to express our solidarity with Ukraine and support for the continued recommended sanctions from the IOC on Russia and Belarus. As an international sports federation, we believe in the importance of upholding the values of respect, integrity, and solidarity, and we stand with Ukraine in its fight for independence and sovereignty. We commend the IOC for early taking a strong stance against the violations of international law committed by Russia and Belarus.

The IOF acknowledges the ongoing process which started after the Olympic Summit 2022 and led by the IOC to assess whether, and potentially how, athletes from Russia and Belarus can be allowed to participate in international sports competitions, and how to ensure that athletes can compete in a fair and safe environment. Further, we support the emphasis from the IOC on the importance of the independence and responsibility of each international federation in making the right decisions for their sport.

The IOF is one of the international federations where the memberships of the member federations in Russia and Belarus have been suspended following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. The IOF Council suspended the memberships of these member federations in February and March 2022, and these decisions were confirmed and ratified by the IOF General Assembly in July 2022 by a clear majority of our members. The basis of the suspensions is that the member federations in Russia and Belarus do not meet the membership obligations outlined in the [IOF statutes](#). Athletes with citizenship in countries where the members are suspended cannot participate in IOF competitions.

The IOF has followed the discussions and consultations taking place within the Olympic movement related to the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in international sports. We have carried out a consultation process within our organisation to assess



whether, and potentially how, some of the affected athletes from Russia and Belarus should be allowed to participate in IOF competitions.

This process was actualized by the fact that the war in Ukraine and consequent suspensions of the IOF members in Russia and Belarus might last for a long time and that the current suspensions exclude a significant number of athletes from participating in IOF competitions. This includes athletes who do not support, or are clearly against, this war.

Based upon this, the IOF decided to proactively initiate a process to investigate the position of its member federations and athlete representatives on the topic. The goal was to determine if the IOF should put in place extraordinary structures to address the consequences for athletes from suspended member federations. A clear proposal was drafted containing potential conditions for a neutral IOF Team and was sent out for consultation to athlete representatives and member federations in January 2023. The responses received during the consultation process showed a very clear majority, both among member federations and athletes, advising to not make any changes to the current sanctions on participation. The IOF Council has listened to and agreed with the advice provided by its members and at its Council meeting on March 10 decided not to move forward with the proposal.

The IOF's response to the war in Ukraine and the suspension of the members in Russia and Belarus has been strengthened by the very clear message received from our members.

In light of the recent IOC Executive Board recommendation regarding the participation of athletes from Russia and Belarus, the IOF wishes to reinforce the above decision which has been taken in consultation with our membership and athletes. We feel this is fully in line with the recommendation regarding the independence of international sports federations in making decisions for their sport.

The IOF will continue to monitor the situation closely and assess whether the basis for the suspensions of our members in Russia and Belarus will change in the coming months.

Thank you for your continued leadership in promoting the values of the Olympic movement.

Sincerely,

Leho Haldna  
IOF President

Sondre Gullord  
IOF Secretary General