

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

USA HI: 04:00 a.m.; USA CA, CAN BC: 06:00 a.m.; USA CO, CAN Calgary: 07:00 a.m.; USA NY, MI, VA: 09:00 a.m.; DOM: 10:00 a.m.; UK, IRL, POR: 02:00 p.m.; GER, SRB, FRA: 03:00 p.m.; UGA: 05:00 p.m.; UAE: 06.00 p.m.; JPN: 11:00 p.m.; KOR: 11:00 p.m

Board members present:

Robert “Nob” Rauch (chair), Brian Gisel, Kate Bergeron, Thomas Griesbaum (via proxy), Caroline “Caz” Malone, Haude Hermand, Rob McLeod, Liam Grant, David Raflo, José Amoroso, Fumio Morooka, Charlie Mead, Alex Matovu, Nicole Bulos (via proxy), Lori Daniels (via proxy)

Also attending (non voting): Volker Bernardi, (Secretary General), Karina Woldt (Managing Director Events and Operations), Igor Janković (Administrative Coordinator), Patrick Fourcampré-Maye (Event Coordinator), Tim Rockwood (Managing Director Broadcasting and Marketing)

Board members absent/excused:

Yoonee Jeong, Adam Swansson, Jamie Nuwer

Call to order (time: 15:00 CET)

Quorum reached with 15 votes of 10/18 needed.

Introduction by the President

The President welcomed everybody to the Emergency Board Meeting and thanked for participating at short notice. Recent world events had made it necessary for WFDF to take a few decisions quickly.

The military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation with the support of Belarus has resulted in a bitter war. This has led the IOC to make a strong request for all of sport to isolate Russia in conjunction with the political, financial, and economic sanctions which are being put on the Russian government and its people as well as Belarus by countries and institutions across the globe.

WFDF ExComm had met at the evening before and is recommending the adoption of a five-part response by WFDF:

1. The WFDF Board affirms its full solidarity with the Ukrainian Flying Disc Federation (UFDF) and the Ukrainian Olympic Community.

2. The Russian Flying Disc Federations (RFDF) and the Belarusian Flying Disc Federation (BFDF) are suspended with immediate effect, including the full set of their membership rights, until further notice.
3. No athletes and officials from Russia and Belarus are eligible to participate in any WFDF sanctioned event until further notice.
4. All persons from Russia and Belarus holding positions of leadership in WFDF, or who serve in WFDF Committees and Commissions in any capacity, are asked to resign from their position with immediate effect.
5. No WFDF sanctioned events will be awarded to Russia and Belarus until further notice (none are currently scheduled).

No Russian or Belarus teams had registered for the WUCC 2022. Two Mixed teams had initially registered for WMUCC 2022 but failed to pay the registration fees and, after three requests and extensions, and after missing the final deadline of February 28, 2022, they had previously been dropped from the WMUCC. There is a Russian Under 20 Mixed team registered for the WJUC 2022 and one for EUF's Under 17 Youth Ultimate Championship and there is a Ukrainian and a Russian entry for the World Team Disc Golf Championship in 2022.

It has traditionally been WFDF's policy to not want to impact athletes for actions of their national federation leadership. This has been the approach of WFDF and the entire world of sport in connection with Russia due to the rampant, systematic, and ongoing state-sponsored doping program by the Russian Federation. Similar to what was applied in the Winter Olympics last month, WFDF was going to permit teams from Russia to compete at our events in 2022 but under a neutral banner; they would have been referred to as the RFDF team but no Russian flag or anthem or other reference to the government would have been made.

The events in Ukraine are unprecedented in recent history. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was totally unprovoked and it has been vicious. Regular citizens are being targeted, and apartments, schools and hospitals are being hit with missiles deliberately to instill terror and fear. It is not clear what can be done to stop this horrific situation at any level. Governments are reluctant to intercede militarily in fears of starting a broader great power conflict. Accordingly, we are seeing an unprecedented array of economic and political sanctions targeting the financial system of Russia and its access to the broader world. In most aspects, Russia is now politically, economically, and financially isolated across the globe.

Russia's political leadership has always embraced sport as a means to glorify Russia and have a seal of approval. As we have seen in the way Russia has responded to the hybrid sanctions by the IOC because of the ongoing state-sponsored doping, the hybrid sanctions are not enough. This was personified in the doping case that just arose with the Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva at the Olympics. It seems Russia figures that everyone knows that an athlete under the ROC banner is Russian. The recent call by the IOC to all international sports

federations is prompted to close off this path to tacit approval of Putin and his actions. Virtually all sports have already announced strong actions and nearly all of them have instituted a full and outright ban on any participation by Russia and Belarussian athletes in international events, and have decided not to host any events in the two countries.

While the actions announced were decided by the various governing bodies of sports, the athletes themselves are also driving this decision to impose total bans. Many athletes have expressed discomfort that Russian athletes might be able to partake in sport while Ukrainian athletes are denied that chance as they defend their country or are in fear for their physical well-being.

Most athletes in Russia and Belarus may not support the actions of their country's leadership, and we recognize that a ban on such athletes from participating in WFDF events puts an undeserved hardship on the athletes and members of the Flying Disc communities in Russia and Belarus. Nevertheless, the entire world of sport must stand united against such blatant aggression and acts of war threatening human society and the possibility for all people in the world to meet during sport events fostering friendship between nations away from any threat or discrimination, and observing fundamental human rights. Accordingly, it was recommended that the board approve the five elements that have been presented.

Discussion

There was a review of the long list of international sports federations which had already imposed similar restrictions on Russian and Belarussian federations and athletes. The numbers were increasing steadily.

WFDF Disc Golf Committee members unanimously agreed with the actions ExComm had proposed. WFDF should keep in mind to not only ban Russian or Belarussian athletes but also to support Ukrainian athletes in the future. It was noted that in an upcoming high-level PDGA Eurotour Disc Golf tournament in Croatia five Russian athletes were participating and actually already had travelled to the venue. At the time the PDGA's position on this situation was unclear.

It was agreed that WFDF wanted to be supportive of Ukrainian athletes but it was unclear how and to what extent this would be possible. According to the IOC statement about "imminent" events, it was acceptable to have Russian athletes participating in the Eurotour event, especially if the athletes were already at the venue. It was noted that it was possible that other participants might take offense of Russian athletes being there. It was the decision of the sanctioning body PDGA and the local organizing committee to do what was in the best interest of all athletes attending the event.

It was confirmed that some athletes had already expressed discomfort about the Russian participants. The LOC of EuroTour #1 was attempting to suggest that the Russian athletes should compete neutrally and that PDGA should remove reference to them being Russian. It was unclear what decision PDGA would take.

EFDF, EUF and EDGF had already met and discussed this situation. While no decision had been made yet, it was expected these federations would follow WFDF's actions. The team and player ban might be applied as early as May when the EUMCC in Wroclaw, Poland will take place for which Russian teams had registered. There was a need for a clarification about individual Russian athletes who would be playing for non-Russian teams.

WFDF is considering to apply the eligibility definition of "WFDF citizenship" to non-resident Russian players. This would allow athletes who had been living outside of Russia for a stated minimum amount of time and who were part of the local Ultimate community to be allowed to compete with their respective local teams. It was commented that players living in Russia most likely would not get a Visa to enter foreign countries in any case.

It was understandable that in this situation in which Ukrainian athletes could not participate that the same should apply to Russian athletes. While it was positive that there were exemptions possible for non-resident individual Russian athletes, a board member asked why we would not allow neutral Russian teams to participate. It was noted that WFDF should consider similar war situations in the future and be consistent. It was also noted that a Russian member of the Women in Sport Commission had stepped down in 2021 due to inactivity.

It was clarified that the concept of neutral teams from Russia was already in place for 2022 in response to the persistent anti-doping violations. The new situation with blatant hostile aggression was something different. While WFDF would like to stay out of politics, the current actions were being organized on a global basis due to the extraordinary nature of the situation. It is expected that the entire sports world would introduce bans and restrictions and this made it different to situations in the past. It was very harsh on the individual athletes but allowing Russian teams to attend neutrally would still be seen by the Russian Federation's government as a representation of the country. Also, having Russians attend events could make other athletes feel uncomfortable, just as had been explained in connection with the Croatian Disc Golf event, also in part due to Russian threats towards other countries. Having the whole world of sport united in this action would send a very powerful message and hopefully contribute to the pressures for a peaceful resolution and withdrawal of attacking forces from Ukraine.

It was generally agreed that since Ukrainian athletes could not attend sports events during war in their country it would be unfair to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to

participate. It was also reiterated that the Ukrainian Flying Disc Federation has requested such a ban.

The question was posed under what conditions these restrictions could be removed. It was unclear at this moment but WFDF would follow the situation as it developed.

One board member commented that it was important for WFDF to recognize the unprecedented nature of this move by WFDF to ban Russia and Belarusian athletes, that it was a step into the political arena, and that we should therefore be prepared to make similar decisions to protect our communities such as Palestinians and Syrians who suffer oppression and in conflict. In response, it was stated that the Russian invasion – an attack motivated by no other purpose but to forcibly seize the territory of a separate nation -- was unprecedented since World War II. The IOC had always said that athletes should not be impacted by the actions of their governments, but in this extreme situation decided to move away from this policy.

The comment was made that WFDF would not make this decision just because other IFs were doing this but because WFDF felt it was the right decision. It was also mentioned that WFDF should be prepared to do more to be positive and actively support Ukrainians athletes as appropriate in future.

It was agreed that the Board vote would be for the package of all five actions to be taken.

Decision

A motion was made for WFDF to take the five actions as mentioned above and seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

A draft press release would be finalized within the next hour. In addition WFDF would send a letter to the Russian Flying Disc Federation and the Belarusian Flying Disc Federation. It was agreed that there would be communication with the PDGA to ask them for a response concerning the upcoming EuroTour event in Croatia, and the athletes would be informed directly.

EFDF, EUF and EDGF are expected to issue a joint statement on this topic later in the evening.

Closing at 15:50 CET

submitted by Thomas Griesbaum
WFDF Secretary