



PEACE NEGOTIATIONS
POST-CONFLICT CONSTITUTIONS
WAR CRIMES PROSECUTION

Open Letter from the PILPG Circle of Former Ambassadors of the UN Human Rights Council to International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach on the Potential Readmission of "Neutral" Russian and Belarussian Athletes for the 2024 Olympics

President Thomas Bach
International Olympic Committee
Maison Olympique
1007 Lausanne, Switzerland

March 27, 2023

Dear President Bach,

The Public International Law & Policy Group's Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council follows with great attentiveness the current consideration by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on whether to uphold or reverse the [resolution](#) dated February 28, 2022, excluding Russian and Belarussian athletes and officials from international competitions in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The PILPG Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council calls on the International Olympic Committee to solicit additional Rapporteurs' opinions on the range of human rights to allow for a balanced and comprehensive view before deciding on the reversal of the ban.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the International Olympic Committee's executive board issued a [resolution](#) recommending International Sports Federations and sports event organizers not to invite or allow the participation of Russian and Belarussian athletes and officials in international competitions and reaffirmed its full solidarity with the Ukrainian Olympic Community.

In September 2022, the Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights, Alexandra Xanthaki, and the former Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, E. Tendayi Achiume, submitted a [letter](#) challenging the International Olympic

Committee's former decision to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes from a human rights perspective. Xanthaki and Achiume argue such a ban raises "serious issues of non-discrimination," as well as issues around the right to equality, the right to participate in cultural life, which includes the practice of sport, and the right to work.

The PILPG Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council:

- Reiterates its strong support of all the UNHRC members' efforts in upholding sports to promote peace and tolerance, and belief in the core values that constitute the foundation of the Olympic movement, including excellence, respect, and friendship;
- Remains aware that the International Olympic Committee's prior recommendations and regulations to be implemented by the International Sports Federations and sports event organizers were stipulated in the resolution to be in line with "putting priority on the integrity of the competitions and the safety of athletes" and were followed by the decision of the vast majority of the Olympic Movement to adopt protective measures that consisted of not authorizing the participation of Russian and Belarusian national selections;
- Takes notice of the recent intensive exploratory discussions at the International Olympic Committee Executive Board meetings of January 25, 2023, and December 7, 2022, as well as of the 11th Olympic Summit of December 9, 2022, aimed at revisiting the previous declarations and decisions towards possible readmission of "neutral Russians and Belarussian Athletes" for the 2024 Olympic Games;
- Fully recognizes the complexities of the public debate and pressure before the upcoming International Olympic Committee's Executive Board meeting scheduled for 28-30 March 2023 on the Olympic Movement's position on sanctions against Russia and Belarus; and
- Remains concerned about the effect that a new decision by the International Olympic Committee on lifting the ban and the readmission of Russian and Belarusian athletes into international sports competitions might have on the unity of the Olympic movement.

In light of the forthcoming decision by the International Olympic Committee on the possible readmission of Russian and Belarusian athletes into international

sports competitions, scheduled for March 28-30, 2023, the PILPG Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council puts forward the following position:

- Strong condemnation of the Russian Federation's violation of the Olympic Truce, which serves as the cornerstone of the Olympic Games, providing safety and a peaceful environment for both the athletes competing in the Games and for the spectators in attendance;
- Reiteration of the mandate of 45 thematic and 14 country mandate holders as a part of the Human Rights Council Special Procedures and the character of the "communication - letter" that [Special Rapporteurs](#) use to address governments, NGOs, and others. Special Procedures are not quasi-judicial and do not have the power or authority to enforce their views or recommendations;
- Reminder to the International Olympic Committee that the findings and views of the Special Rapporteurs should be taken seriously within their respective mandates, including "the aim to raise awareness," "draw the attention of Governments and others on alleged human rights violations," and "ask that the violations are prevented, stopped, investigated, or that remedial action is taken"; and
- Affirmation of the importance of the International Olympic Committee's further exploration into additional views, evaluation, and recommendations on the range of human rights from the other Human Rights Council's Special Procedures, not only the two mentioned so far.

While collectively, we fully support the work of Human Rights Council mandate holders and fully uphold their authoritative and independent voice, we do not believe that the International Olympic Committee ban on Russian and Belarusian should be evaluated and enforced solely on the "issue of non-discrimination." The International Olympic Committee ban was based on "putting priority on the integrity of the competitions and the safety of athletes," having in mind the close relationship between those restricted and their country Russian Federation they represent, and the gross violation of human rights and atrocities by that state in the unprovoked, illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Given the incidents that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity (based on the findings of the UN HRC [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine](#)), the PILPG Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council calls on and encourages the International Olympic Committee to look into this matter further, to engage in thoughtful exploration before deciding on

reversing the ban, and to solicit the opinions of additional Rapporteurs to allow for balanced and thorough consideration.

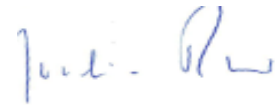
Names

Signatures

Zorica Maric Djordjevic
Former Ambassador of Montenegro, Chair



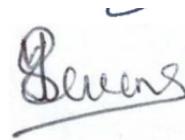
Dr. Joachim Rücker
Former Ambassador of Germany



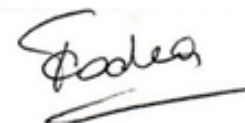
Keith Harper
Former Ambassador of the United States of America



Yvette Stevens
Former Ambassador of Sierra Leone



Filloreta Kodra
Former Ambassador of Albania



Tudor Ulianoschi
Former Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova

Tudor Ulianoschi

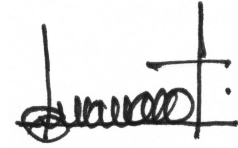
Amanda Ellis
Former Ambassador of New Zealand



Vojislav Suc
Former Ambassador of Slovenia



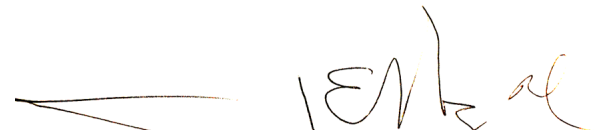
Jorge Lomonaco
Former Ambassador of Mexico



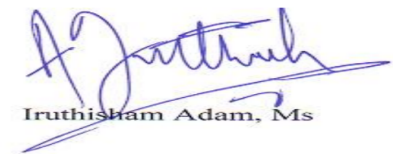
Francisco Villagrán de León
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Juan Esteban Aguirre
Former Ambassador of Paraguay



Dr. Iruthisham Adam
Former Ambassador of the Maldives



Iruthisham Adam, Ms