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21 April 2023

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

PACE Hearing of 25 April 2023 on “Excluding the athletes and officials of the Russian Federation and Belarus from participating in the international Olympic Movement”

Background and objective of the hearing

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) is following attentively the current debates and controversy concerning the question of the possible participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games as “neutral athletes”.

The Assembly is aware that a decision to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes from the Games would raise delicate issues in terms of compliance with the Olympic Charter, and that the compatibility of such a ban with international human rights standards prohibiting discrimination has been questioned.

However, taking a decision to allow for the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris 2024 Games in the context of the ongoing large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine is considered by many as totally unthinkable and unacceptable, given the tragic loss of thousands of Ukrainian lives and the pain and suffering which this aggression continues to cause.

The PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media has been entrusted with the preparation of a report to study this complex question. In this context, a public hearing will take place at the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, on Tuesday 25 April, from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm.

The hearing should give PACE members an opportunity to discuss with key guest speakers the issues at stake, to identify possible commonalities based around shared values of human rights and dignity, the rule of law and peace, as well as sporting values.

Invited guests

- **Ms Amélie Oudéa-Castéra**, Minister of Sports and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, France (video message)
- **The Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP**, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, United Kingdom (video message), represented by Mr Adam Conant, Head of Sport - Department for Culture, Media & Sport, United Kingdom
- **Mr Andriy Chesnokov**, Deputy Minister for Youth and Sports of Ukraine for European Integration (online)
- **Ms Alexandra Xanthaki**, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, United Nations (in person)
- **Mr Francesco Ricci Bitti**, President of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) (in person)
- **Mr Gerd Kanter**, Chairperson of the Athletes' Commission, European Olympic Committees (EOC) Estonia (online)

Representatives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

- **Mr Arsen Julfalakyan** (Armenia), Olympic silver medalist, World and European Champion, Wrestling Greco-Roman, Chair of the United World Wrestling (UWW) Athletes' Commission (in person)
- **Ms Gaby Ahrens** (Namibia), Olympian, Shooting, Chair of the Athletes' Commission of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) (in person)

Programme of the hearing (tentative)

- **Opening** by Mr Stefan Schennach, 1st Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, Chair in office for the sitting
- **Welcome speech** by Mr Tiny Kox, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
- **1st Round Table**
 - **Ms Amélie Oudéa-Castéra**, Minister of Sports and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, France (video message)
 - **The Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP**, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, United Kingdom (video message).
 - **Mr Andriy Chesnokov**, Deputy Minister for Youth and Sports of Ukraine for European Integration (online)

The Ministers will present their position and expectations.

Their interventions (around 5 minutes each) will be followed by a Q&A session. Mr Adam Conant, Head of Sport - Department for Culture, Media & Sport, United Kingdom, will be available to reply questions addressed to the Secretary of State.

- **2nd Round Table**
 - **Ms Alexandra Xanthaki**, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, United Nations (in person)
 - **Mr Francesco Ricci Bitti**, President of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) (in person)
 - **Mr Gerd Kanter**, Chairperson of the Athletes' Commission, European Olympic Committees (EOC) Estonia (online)
Representatives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)
 - **Mr Arsen Julfalakyan** (Armenia), Olympic silver medalist, World and European Champion, Wrestling Greco-Roman, Chair of the United World Wrestling (UWW) Athletes' Commission (in person)
 - **Ms Gaby Ahrens** (Namibia), Olympian, Shooting, Chair of the Athletes' Commission of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) (in person).

The guests will be invited to take the floor and present their position.

Their interventions (around 5 minutes each) will be followed by a Q&A session.

- **Final round table**

The guests will be invited to take the floor and make their final remarks (1-2 minutes each).

- **Closing of the hearing** by Mr Stefan Schennach, Chair in Office for the sitting.

Rules

The hearing will be public and open to the media. It will be web-streamed and videorecorded. Records will be published on the PACE website.

During the hearing, only PACE members will be allowed to ask for the floor, if they wish to make short comments and put questions to the guests. The Chair in office will moderate the exchange and allocate speaking time for questions and answers.

A few journalists might be admitted to the meeting room, just as observers and they will not be allowed to intervene or ask questions.