

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Video Conference
16th March 2020

Minutes

1. Welcome and Opening

1.1 President's opening remarks

The ITTF President, Mr Thomas Weikert, welcomed everyone and thanked the ITTF Staff for the significant efforts and the hard work during the crisis and trying to manage this extraordinary situation, especially in view of the events cancellations and postponements.

1.2 Roll Call

Thomas Weikert	ITTF President
Khalil Al-Mohannadi	Deputy President
Petra Sörling	Executive Vice-President - Finance
Bruce Burton	Executive Vice-President
Masahiro Maehara	Executive Vice-President
Shi Zhihao	Executive Vice-President
Alaa Meshref	Executive Vice-President
James Morris	Executive Vice-President
Nestor Tenca	Executive Vice-President
Zoran Primorac	Athletes Commission Chair
Ryu Seungmin	IOC Member
In attendance	
Steve Dainton	CEO
Raul Calin	Secretary General
Iulia Necula	CEO's Office Projects Director
Claudia Vatheuer	Assistant to the President
Vicky Eleftheriade	Competition Director
Michael Brown	CFO
Matt Pound	Marketing Director
Mounir Bessah	Member Relations Director
Miran Kondric	Sports Science and Medical Committee Chair

2. On-line meeting – protocol

The Secretary General, Mr Raul Calin, thanked everyone for their quick reaction and engagement given the emergency of the situation, and instructed the participants on the technical aspects and the protocol of the on-line meeting.

3. Confirmation of the agenda

The agenda was confirmed with the inclusion of the point 6.3 Crisis Management.

4. COVID-2019 situational report

The CEO, Mr Steve Dainton, started by making a reference to the documents that were shared with the EC members prior to the meeting, containing an overview of the evolution and the global impact caused by the COVID-19 outbreak and informing about the measures taken by different international organizations.

Mr Dainton emphasized that with the spread of COVID-19 across different parts of the world, the ITTF is prioritizing the health and safety of all players, coaches, officials and fans, and reconfirmed the decision to suspend all ITTF events and activities until the end of April 2020, and to postpone the Hana Bank 2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships and the ITTF World Tour Platinum Japan Open.

5. WTTC postponement

Mr Ryu indicated that the LOC had no other choice than postponing the Hana Bank 2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships (WTTTC) due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Korea Republic. Mr Ryu gave a positive report about the number of new cases in Korea reducing day by day, however, the situation in the World evolves adversely, and therefore further back-up plans will be made to hold the event towards the end of the year, in the case it is needed to postpone further.

Mr Ryu thanked the ITTF Staff for the help and support during this extraordinary situation and re-assured that despite the uncertainty, the LOC is still very committed to host a successful WTTTC.

Mr Dainton indicated that hosting the WTTTC is the ITTF's main priority in terms of events organization in 2020. It is clear as result of the internal financial evaluations made and the risks management evaluation.

The SSMC Chair, Prof Miran Kondric, reported on his attendance to the International Federations Medical Commission Chairpersons Meeting held in Monaco on 10th and 11th March, and briefed on the advices of WHO's and other Health Organisations. Prof Kondric indicated that at the moment it is unpredictable the length of this pandemic.

The Deputy President, Mr Khalil Al-Mohannadi, reminded about the unfortunate situation experienced during the ITTF World Tour Platinum Qatar Open, when several delegations/teams as well as some ITTF Staff, were not able to travel and enter the country. Mr Al-Mohannadi apologised for the inconveniences caused by the situation and ensured that this was not a political issue, but just a result of the measures taken by the local authorities in an attempt to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The AC Chair, Mr Zoran Primorac, agreed with the proposals and stressed about the pressure felt by the players leading up to the Olympic Games and the difficulty to concentrate on the practice of sport in this moment of uncertainty.

The EVP, Dr Alaa Meshref, stressed about the necessity to have precise timelines for the final decision which will determine the feasibility and dates of the WTTTC.

Mr Weikert and the CEO stated that in this continuously evolving situation it is difficult to set precise timelines and deadlines; but eventually, the ITTF will take a decision with a minimum of 6 weeks anticipation to the currently proposed dates.

The EVP, Mr Bruce Burton, echoed Prof. Kondric in the aspect of the uncertainty of the duration of this pandemic, as Europe is not yet on the peak and other continents are just experiencing the start of the outbreak, therefore, Mr Burton considers there is a long way to have a proper situation.

20200316-EC-01

The ITTF EC decided to explore contingency options for the World Championships in case they cannot be organized in June, trying to ensure they can be hosted in 2020, under the premise of ensuring the Health for all the participants as the number 1 priority.

ACTION 20200316#01	In charge: ITTF Management	Deadline: 2020-03-25
The ITTF staff will work together with the 2020 WTTTC LOC on further back-up plans in case the WTTTC needs a further postponement.		

The Competition Director, Mrs Vicky Eleftheriade, gave a brief updated on the recent events:

- ITTF World Tour Platinum Qatar Open – Doha 3-8 March 2020: It was completed successfully, however, a few delegations were affected by travel restrictions imposed a few days before the event was starting
- ITTF Challenge Plus Oman Open - Muscat 11-15 March: It was also completed smoothly, with a similar situation to the Qatar Open in terms of travel restrictions
- ITTF Challenge Polish Open, Gliwice 11-15 March: It was suspended with effect on 13th March due to the fact that the venue administration decided to close the facilities, making impossible to continue the competition.

Mrs Eleftheriade reported that one of the athletes participating at the Polish Open was suspected as a potential carrier of the COVID-19, therefore she was hospitalized and tested. Later on, the ITTF was informed that the test result was negative, and the athlete was released from the hospital and travelled back home.

The EVP, Mr Maehara Masahiro, praised the work done by the Competition Staff and thanked them for the way they handled the situation.

The Secretary General, Mr Raul Calin, suggested that the ITTF should send congratulation letters to the Table Tennis Associations of Qatar and Oman for their successful conduction of their events despite the challenging situation.

ACTION 20200316#02	In charge: Secretary General	Deadline: 2020-03-31
The ITTF to send congratulation letters to Qatar and Oman Table Tennis Associations for their successful conduction of the Qatar and Oman Opens despite the difficulties they faced.		

The Competition Director explained that a decision will need to be taken soon regarding the upcoming events scheduled in May:

- ITTF World Tour Hang Seng Hong Kong Open, Hong Kong, China (HKG): 5-10 May
- ITTF World Tour Platinum China Open, Shenzhen (CHN): 12-17 May

6. Seeking Solutions

6.1 Replacement events for World Tour

Mr Dainton stated that in order to ensure that ITTF can maintain its current financial model, it is important to seek urgent solutions in the following order of priority:

- WTTTC
- WT & WTGF
- World Cups

Mr Dainton indicated that the ITTF has recommended to Hong Kong and China to postpone their World Tours and an answer is expected in the coming days.

Mr Primorac suggested that after the WTTTC, the Olympic Qualification should be treated as the next priority and stressed the uncertainty that the players are dealing with. Mr Primorac insisted that the most important aspect to consider is to ensure fairness for all the athletes. Mr Weikert pointed out that Mr Cowan and himself have had a lot of conversations with players in Doha at the Qatar Open. Mr Weikert underlined the aspects mentioned by Mr Primorac.

The CEO warned that the postponement of the WTTTC and the potential postponement of several World Tour Events scheduled in April, May, and June, could result in not having the chance to accommodate all of them in 2020, and eventually upgrading some existing events already planned at the end of the year could be an alternative.

Mr Morris did an inquiry about the Australian Open, and Mr Dainton assured that the ITTF is in constant contact with all the involved LOCs and working together to seeking solutions and eventual compensations, especially for those compromised by the WTTTC postponement.

6.2 Ranking / Olympic Qualifiers for those affected by the new sudden travel restrictions and cancelled/postponed events

The ITTF is considering options regarding the pending events on the qualifying pathway for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The four continental events that had been scheduled for April 2020 will no longer take place as planned. Ideas will be discussed with the Continental Federations, the ITTF Athletes Commission and finally proposed to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for a joint decision.

One option is organizing the four remaining continental events together with the World Singles Qualification Tournament (WSQT), and eventually all five events happening around the World Championships, at the end of June, in order to maximize the time for practice for the athletes that currently cannot do. The last possible alternative would be the use of the World Ranking, an option which is already contemplated on the Qualification System.

The ITTF is in close contact with the IOC on this matter and, similarly, the ITTF is in touch with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the Athletes Commission in all related to the Paralympic Games pathway.

Mr Al-Mohannadi suggested those events should be held in whichever location is safer to have them, not necessarily in Qatar.

The EVP, Mr Nestor Tenca, stressed about the importance of communicating and seeking solutions in agreement with the Continental Associations.

- 6.3 The EVP, Mrs Petra Sörling, recommended to create a special task force group for crisis management with the mandate to take the lead and take all the measures, decisions necessary in this situation of crisis that the organisation is facing at the moment. The EC agreed and suggested the task force group will have the mandate to gather information and report daily to the EC and the Senior Management. The CEO and SG to appoint the members of the group and present weekly reports on the evolution of the situation.

20200316-EC-02

The ITTF EC decided to establish a COVID-19 Task Force group with the mandate to handle the current situation and report daily to the EC and the Senior Management. The CEO and SG to appoint the members of the group and present weekly reports in regard to the evolution of the situation.

ACTION 20200316#03	In charge: CEO & SG	Deadline: 2020-03-24
The CEO and SG to establish the COVID-19 Task Force group and provide direction.		

7. Financial implications and contingencies

The CFO, Mr Michael Brown, presented an overview of the financial impact as a result of the disruption of the ITTF events and activities.

Mr Brown noted that the evaluation takes into consideration the ongoing contracts in reference to all the ITTF properties, containing the relevant information that concerns directly the ITTF without considering the impact on the LOCs. Mr Brown presented the finances from a Postponement vs Cancellation perspective which might result into a 6 million difference, with sponsorship causing a significant impact on the overall finances of the ITTF.

Mr Dainton reminded about the discussions in New Delhi and stated that the future growth plan of ITTF has been put on hold, while the management has already done the preliminary work on the Contingency Plan.

In terms of HR growth, an email informing about the financial situation and complications will be sent to the Senior Staff. Some of the measures to be taken are:

- No new hires for the time being
- Freeze of salaries in 2020

- No bonuses at the end of 2020
- In case of necessity, the staff might be required to take a month cut in the salary

Mr Dainton ended indicating that although the situation is not critic at the moment, he will make one-month salary cut as a show that top level management is ready to take some cuts when it is a difficult situation.

Mr Calin indicated that he will also take make a one-month cut on his salary in solidarity with the decision and rationale of Mr Dainton.

Mr Weikert mentioned it was not a must, but a very nice gesture.

Mrs Sörling mentioned the example of SAS in Sweden, where drastic decisions had to be taken, with 10,000 employees put on hold, their key staff reducing their salaries with immediate effect and their Board reducing their honorarium and traveling on lower classes.

The EVP, Masahiro Maehara, expressed his concern about WTT in 2021.

Mr Dainton noted that although there is a plan in place, the management is more focused on solving current issues rather than thinking in 2021. However, the ITTF Marketing Director, Mr Matt Pound will put focus on WTT during the coming weeks.

Mr Pound stated that at the moment the conversations with the cities are being delayed until the situation can revert, and that the EC will be regularly updated in the progress.

Dr Meshref recommended that once the market starts to pick up again, it will be an opportunity to sell the property in Lausanne, if this helps the financial situation.

Mr Dainton noted that in the first phase, the current management will try not to use any of the ITTF reserves. If the situation continues to be adverse, it might be needed in order to support the WTTTC LOC or find extra solutions for the WT. Mr Dainton mentioned the EC should consider that eventually 2020 may be a year with a financial loss.

Mr Ryu thanked the ITTF for all the considerations and called for the EC to act jointly during this complicated period.

8. Communication protocol

Mr Calin informed that the Management created a preliminary draft of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to be used for internal & external communication purposes and will be shared with the EC members after the meeting.

Mr Dainton indicated that new questions can be added as necessary, becoming a living document, and suggesting that the FAQ can be added daily by the task force when updating the EC.

Mr Calin suggested that when individual members of the EC receive questions from Athletes, it will be important to copy always in the correspondence Mr Primorac as AC Chair.

9. Any other business

9.1 IOC Video Conference on Tuesday 17th March

Mr Weikert indicated that following the IOC Video Conference on Tuesday, to be attended by President and Secretary General, a report will be made to the EC.

9.2 World Veteran Championships (WVC)

Mr Weikert mentioned the concern regarding the World Veteran Championships. Mrs Sörling mentioned about a communication received from the LOC, which was positive, however the situation worsened on the following days.

Mr Weikert suggested to work with Mr Calin, Mr Kaye and Mr Serra in a surveillance plan for the WVC.

Mr Morris indicated that the some of the participants in the WVC are in the critical age group of affection risk due to COVID-19, and also the ITTF staff and officials eventually attending could be exposed to risk.

Mr Maehara mentioned the concern regarding the cancellation fee for the World Veteran Championships, and Mr Weikert indicated the working group established will deal with.

9.3 Health Care

Prof. Kondric suggested to publish on ITTF.com the ASOIF Health Care Guidelines for International Federation Events and make it available for the general public.

Mr Kondric suggested to give more visibility to Health measures on the ITTF website and asked the ITTF Marketing department to assist engaging athletes in interviews and other actions that can help raising awareness within the Table Tennis community about social distancing and other measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Mr Calin mentioned the COVID-19 section will be made available with greater visibility on the ITTF website.

ACTION 20200316#04	In charge: Raul Calin	Deadline: 2020-03-18
COVID-19 section to be displayed more prominently on ITTF.com.		

Mr Pound suggested that as there is a period without events content, the creative team is already working in initiatives with top players showing social responsibility.

ACTION 20200316#05	In charge: Zoran Primorac and Matt Pound	Deadline: 2020-03-25
The Marketing Director and the Athletes Commission Chair to work on initiatives to show social responsibility by top players.		

10. Next EC meeting

On Sunday 29th March 2020, the ITTF Executive Committee will meet again to evaluate the situation and to consider if the suspension of all ITTF events and activities needs to be extended or not.

11. Adjournment

Mr Calin thanked the EC Members for attending this first on-line EC meeting and encouraged to use more often this technological solution, which is more sustainable and cost effective, but also particularly in these times safer.

Without further subjects, the meeting was adjourned at 12h55 CET.

Thomas Weikert
ITTF President

Date

Raul Calin
ITTF Secretary General

Date