

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Video Conference
Wednesday 15th April 2020

Minutes

1. Welcome and Opening

1.1 President's opening remarks

The President, Mr Thomas Weikert, welcomed those in attendance and on behalf of the Executive Committee, presented his condolences to Mr Bruce Burton, due to his father passing away two days before the meeting.

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
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
Michael Brown	CFO
Matt Pound	Marketing Director
Vicky Eleftheriade	Competition Director
Mounir Bessah	Member Relations Director

Apologies	
Shi Zhihao	Executive Vice-President

2. Minutes of the previous Executive Committee meeting

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The Secretary General, Mr Raul Calin, suggested a change of the wording for the action item 20200329#04 related to the HoTT process, what was agreed.

With this change included, the Minutes of the previous Executive Committee meeting were approved and will be signed electronically by the President.

2.2 Business arising from the Minutes

The Secretary General, Mr Raul Calin, reported on the status of the business arising from the previous meetings.

3. **Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was confirmed with the inclusion of the following points:

9.1. CAS Update on the case of the Honorary President

4. **COVID-2019 situational report**

The EC noted the report from the CFO, Mr Michael Brown, on behalf of the Task Force. Mr Weikert thanked the Task Force group highlighting that the information provided in the daily reports is very helpful.

The EVP, Dr Alaa Meshref, noted the suggestion of the COVID-19 Task Force to consider the continental championships postponement or cancellation. Dr Meshref highlighted that some of these Continental Championships have planned also elections in 2020, during their Continental Federations.

ACTION 20200415#01	In charge: ITTF Members Relations	Deadline: 2020-05-31
The ITTF Member Relations to study the eventual impact of the 2020 Continental Championships postponement or cancellation in the elections due in 2020 at these Continental Federations.		

5. **CEO Update**

5.1 World Team Table Tennis Championships update

The CEO, Mr Steve Dainton, briefly updated the EC on the Hana Bank 2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships situation. With the new dates confirmed from Sunday 27th September to Sunday 4th October 2020, the EC noted however that, as raised during the discussions with the LOC, there is a concern on whether the event will be feasible in the currently planned dates.

The IOC Member, Mr Ryu Seungmin, on his capacity as KTTA President, expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the ITTF leadership and staff for the continued support and trust showed during this extraordinary situation and re-assured that despite the uncertainty, the LOC and the Mayor of Busan are still very committed to host a successful WTTC.

Mr Ryu explained that the LOC is experiencing many challenges, especially financial ones, and providers and contractors have indicated that they may be facing bankruptcy and are urging the LOC for payment of contracted services. Mr Ryu assured that the LOC is trying to solve the problem, but he expects additional support will be required from all the stakeholders, including the ITTF, the Korean Government and the Korea Olympic Committee.

Mr Ryu also reported that, given the uncertainty of the duration of the situation caused by COVID-19, the LOC will prepare for a potential further postponement to the end of 2020 or eventually 2021.

Mr Dainton emphasized that from the importance of the event and also from the financial perspective, the first priority is hosting the WTTTC in 2020. The ITTF will work on different financial scenarios, studying the 2021 event calendar in case it would be needed to report the event to 2021.

The AC Chair, Mr Zoran Primorac, mentioned rumours being circulated among the players regarding the possibility of reducing the total number of teams participating in the event.

Mr Dainton ensured that the priority is to guarantee the viability of the World Championships, ideally with the planned size, but that it is important to take the necessary measures to ensure a successful delivery of the WTTTC. Mr Ryu also assured that there is no intention of reducing the size of the WTTTC.

Mr Dainton indicated that if the event needs to be postponed to 2021, the calendar should be carefully considered.

ACTION 20200415#02	In charge: ITTF Management	Deadline: 2020-05-31
The ITTF Staff to work together with the 2020 WTTTC LOC on contingency plans in case the WTTTC requires a further postponement.		

ACTION 20200415#03	In charge: ITTF Management	Deadline: 2020-05-01
The ITTF Staff carefully study the 2021 Event Calendar and work together with the 2020 WTTTC LOC and 2021 WTTTC in order to avoid any potential conflicts.		

6. Athletes' Commission update

Mr Primorac updated the EC on the Athletes Commission activity, which was intensive during the last weeks and thanked the AC members for their engagement.

Mr Primorac reported that the survey conducted among the Athletes, was quite successful and presented the preliminary data collected since its launch, including responses from 122 athletes and 87 para-athletes. The EC noted the report on the majority of responses coming Europe, and Mr Primorac stressed about the importance of receiving feedback from athletes from other continents, particularly from Asia due to the number of active athletes and their competitive level.

The athlete's sentiment is to keep the principles of the Olympic and Paralympic qualification systems, but carefully studying which WR list to consider for the WR quotas.

Mr Primorac also updated the EC on the proposal presented by the AC Deputy Chair, Ms Galia Dvorak, regarding the development of an Athletes Education platform, an initiative supported by the Athletes Commission. A call has been organised with the members of the Education department and other relevant staff to further discuss the development of the project.

The EVP, Mrs Petra Sörling, congratulated the Athletes Commission for the initiative.

ACTION 20200415#04	In charge: ITTF Staff and AC	Deadline: 2020-05-25
To make a second round of calls for surveys to be filled by athletes around the world, particularly, outside Europe.		

7. Operations program

7.1 Finances

The EC members discussed the different financial scenarios and options presented in the financial report submitted by the CFO after the work done in the previous days with the President, the EVP of Finances, the CEO and the Secretary General.

The Deputy President, Mr Khalil Al Mohannadi, praised the previous initiative of the staff's salary reductions, but in his opinion, after studying the financial report, this measure will not be sufficient and stronger actions will be needed, such as reducing the total number of staff, in order to reduce costs.

Mrs Sörling, mentioned the impact of the crisis and the importance to understand that the ITTF can quickly find itself in a difficult situation if being unable to resume its activities soon.

Giving the examples of other International Federations, Mrs Sörling asked to reconsider all the areas of activity, and the relevance of some of staff that are currently inactive due to the lack of events, as well as to consider if the payment of the Honorarium to the President should stay, in view of the current situation without activity on ITTF representation.

Mr Dainton mentioned that after a 2-3 years of growth strategy, it is very difficult situation now to start considering cuts, but due to the crisis, same as with the growth strategy, the ITTF has to be brave and consider taking fast actions, as being too slow might result into a negative outcome.

It was therefore agreed that Mr Dainton and Mr Brown should study the different areas of the organisation for potential HR reductions and provide a report to the EC responsible for HR prior to the next meeting, in order to agree on a report to be presented at the next EC meeting so a reasoned decision can be taken.

Mr Weikert presented his thoughts after the financial meeting and acknowledged the need to take further actions. Mr Weikert mentioned the ITTF being investigating subsidies and other financial support ways available from the Governments in the places where the ITTF has offices, highlighting that it was necessary to find a balance, and not to create a panic among the Staff and the Organisation.

Mr Brown seconded Mr Dainton's statement, insisting that it is necessary to act quickly because any process regarding the HR, takes time to be implemented due to the legal paperwork (contract clauses, different regulations in different countries, etc.).

Mr Primorac stated that his position on this matter remains the same as in the previous meeting and fully support Mr Dainton's and Mr Brown's proposal.

Dr Meshref mentioned that the ITTF needs to assume the worst-case scenario and reduce the expenses as much as possible but keeping into consideration the human aspect and prioritise those that don't have another source of income. In Dr Meshref's opinion, those persons whom the ITTF currently financially support but whom also have other income should be the first to make reductions.

The CEO also informed that the staff has reached the Continental Federations and informed them about the impact that the crisis might have over the ITTF finances, and the fact that ITTF may not be able to fulfil the current contractual obligations provided the current situation will be prolonged.

ACTION 20200415#05	In charge: CEO & CFO	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To study the different areas of the organisation where HR reductions can be made during the pandemic to save cost.		

7.1.1 Closure of a Bank Account

Mr Brown reported that a specific bank account was opened in 2019 to collect entry fees for the World Veterans Tour, but it was proved to be unnecessary, therefore suggesting the EC to close it.

The EC agreed with Mr Brown's proposal.

20200415-EC-01

The Executive Committee decided to close the UBS Bank Account CH24 0024 3243 4676 2270 C initially opened in 2019 to collect WVT participation fees, as the operational need for such an account was proved unnecessary.

ACTION 20200415#06	In charge: CFO	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To close the mentioned Bank Account as per the decision 20200415-EC-01.		

7.2 2020 AGM and BoD

Mr Calin reported that, as agreed with the ITTF President and CEO, and the WTTC 2020 LOC, the dates for the key meetings to be held during the WTTC will keep the original structure, as follows:

- 2020 AGM to be held on 28th September 2020 (day 2 of the WTTC)
- 2020 BoD to be held 30th September 2020 (day 4 of the WTTC)

Mr Calin confirmed with the EC that the call for Propositions and Resolutions will be sent again to the Member Associations, BoD and other stakeholders.

The EC noted that the ITTF is exploring whether a virtual AGM can be held in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many societies and associations are already adopting this formula. This would be only the exceptional solution in case a physical AGM and BoD are not possible in 2020.

20200415-EC-02

The Executive Committee confirmed the dates of 28th September and 30th September 2020 for the 2020 AGM and BoD meetings, and the opening of the call for propositions and resolutions as per the new dates.

ACTION 20200415#07	In charge: Secretary General	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To send AGM & BoD Notice of Business to the Member Associations as per the new dates.		

ACTION 20200415#08	In charge: Secretary General	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To follow the evolution of the Switzerland regulations regarding the remote participating and check the legal conditions that would allow conducting an AGM and BoD through online representation.		

7.3 ITTF Elections

Following the discussions on the last EC meeting, on whether the elections should be postponed to 2022 or they should be kept in 2021, the EC entrusted the ITTF Legal Counsel, Mr Dylan Mah, to provide an unbiased interpretation (Action 20200329#09).

The EC noted the interpretation of the ITTF Legal Counsel, Dylan Mah, that the Elections should be kept in 2021, what was also the interpretation of the EVP, Mr Nestor Tenca, who praised the elaborated document of Mr Mah.

Mr Weikert recommended to still seek further external legal opinion to confirm the accuracy of such decision and Mr Calin suggested Mr Ibarrola and/or Mr Arimany, both lawyers with experience in Swiss Sport law, to provide this expertise. The EC noted this service will be having no cost to the ITTF, as per the good relations with these lawyers.

Mr Weikert suggested he will also seek for legal expertise in Germany, also free of charge and that ultimately, this could be also a question for the AGM.

Mr Dainton and Mr Calin suggested that the elections would not necessarily have to be before the Olympic Games and that it would be normal to expect that the elected Executive Committee in 2017 would be in attendance at the Olympic Games (discussion continue on 8.4 World Championships).

The EVP, Mr Bruce Burton, also agreed with the summary provided by Mr Mah, and highlighted that it was important to conclude the ITTF elections in 2021.

Dr Meshref explained that the Continental Federation will be facing a similar situation as the ITTF, in regard to the continental elections which are scheduled during the 2020 or 2021 continental events. Dr Meshref mentioned that it is necessary to communicate with the Continents and request them to explore different alternatives for the Continental elections in case their Continental events are postponed or cancelled.

The EVP, Mr James Morris, shared the same concern as Dr Meshref.

ACTION 20200415#09	In charge: Secretary General	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To seek the legal opinion of an external legal advisor with the condition that such service will be treated as a courtesy and free of charge.		

8. Competition Program

8.1 Olympic Games Qualification System

The Competition Director, Mrs Vicky Eleftheriade, gave a brief update on the process and the work done together with the IOC, Athletes Commission and the Continental Federations, on the adjustments to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic qualification pathways.

Mrs Eleftheriade reported that following the discussions with the different stakeholders, the general principles of the Olympic Games Qualification System will remain.

- Continental Qualification Events - adjusted to the new dates taking place in 2021.
- World Singles Qualification Tournament – confirmed in May 2021.
- WR Quota - The suggestion is to study carefully the different opinions and proposals and request the IOC to postpone the decision about the date for WR selection to a later stage, after a complete analysis is made.
- Eligibility - The IOC clarified that eligibility deadlines (migrant athletes) will be based in the current Olympic Games dates (new start on 23rd July 2021).

The EC agreed with the process.

Mrs Eleftheriade and Mr Calin will follow up adjusting the Olympic Qualification System document to be presented to the EC for final approval, before submission to the IOC.

20200415-EC-03

The Executive Committee agreed with the proposed roadmap for the to the Olympic Games Qualification System as presented by the Competition Director and the Secretary General.

ACTION 20200415#10	In charge: Comp. D. and SG	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To adjust the Olympic Qualification System document.		

ACTION 20200415#11	In charge: Comp. D. and SG	Deadline: 2020-05-15
To propose a pathway for the WR quotas selection.		

8.2 Paralympic Games Qualification System

Mr Calin gave a brief update on the process and the work done together with the IPC, ITTF Para TT Committee Chair, key staff and volunteers of the Para TT Committee and the Para Athletes representatives, on the adjustments to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Qualification system.

Mr Calin reported that a similar process to the OG was followed, and the EC noted that -in principle-, there is only one remaining tournament to be held, which is postponed to 2021.

The EC agreed with the general principles of the Paralympic Games Qualification System adjustment, as presented by the Competition Director and the Secretary General.

20200415-EC-04

The Executive Committee agreed with the proposed adjustments to the Paralympic Games Qualification System as presented in the meeting.

ACTION 20200415#12	In charge: Comp. D. and SG	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To adjust the Paralympic Qualification System document.		

8.3 World Veteran Championships Update

Mr Morris updated the EC on the report presented by Mr Jordi Serra which has a recommendation to postpone the World Veteran Championships 2022 to 2023.

Mr Morris clarified that the request is made to avoid "competition" in terms of entries due to the eventual postponement of the 2021 European Veteran Championships, which likely will be moved to 2022.

Mr Calin mentioned that being the first ever ITTF World Veteran Championships (i.e., with the ITTF being in charge instead of SCI), the decision should be made after a proper analysis, and not just as the result of a domino effect of other events adjustments.

The EC noted the report from Mr Calin about the ITTF Board of Directors requesting in 2010 the ITTF to recover the ownership of the event from the SCI, and after the work done in recent years, with 2022 being the first ever ITTF WVC, there is a need to professionalize the management of the event and to present something with ITTF standards, above the current events.

Mr Calin suggested that, as discussed in January in Delhi, the ITTF Marketing and Competition Departments should reflect on what should be the structure for the future, and make a proposal to the EC.

Mr Al-Mohannadi, updated the EC on his discussions held with the Oman TTA President, and expressed his disappointment on how the situation was handled without adequate communication within the EC.

Dr Meshref suggested to use a similar approach as with the overall ITTF Events calendar, as the ITTF WVC 2022, should be the number one priority in terms of Veteran Events.

The general consensus was to further evaluate the adequate dates for the ITTF WVC Oman 2022 and defer the decision to a future EC meeting.

ACTION 20200415#13	In charge: ITTF staff	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To study the best dates for the WVC 2022.		

8.4 World Championships 2021

The EC noted the report of Mr Dainton about Houston 2021 LOC expressing their concern in regard to the proximity of the event to the new Olympic Games dates and in regard to the ongoing situation caused by the COVID-19 in the USA.

Mr Dainton indicated that further discussions should be held with the 2021 WTTC LOC and different stakeholders, in order to evaluate the impact of the current situation and to work together on potential scenarios.

Mr Dainton mentioned that, as suggested in 7.3 about the ITTF Elections, it is good to study the possibility of separating the formal meetings such as the AGM and the BoD from the WTTC, as this was already discussed for 2021 taking into consideration it is an election year.

Mr Dainton highlighted that running simultaneously a professional AGM and the World Championships is extremely demanding from the staff and officials involved.

Mr Primorac was in favour of separating the AGM and WTTC but asked what where the additional costs and other financial implications born from such decision.

Mr Calin indicated that the model of separation has been financially successful in other International Federations and that the delay in the 2020 AGM allows the ITTF to work on the necessary adjustments to make possible a separate AGM in the second half of 2021.

Mr Dainton indicated that additional costs might arise from hosting an AGM outside the WTTC, but there are different modalities in which such gatherings are more attractive for the cities and are eligible governmental subsidies.

Dr Meshref noted that changes regarding the separation of AGM and WTTC should be included in the revision of the constitution which will need to be adopted in the next AGM.

Mr Weikert indicated that the idea of having two WTTC and the Olympic Games in the same year is not feasible and suggested to first wait and see how the situation evolves in the coming months and get further information regarding the potential scenarios.

ACTION 20200415#14	In charge: ITTF Management	Deadline: 2020-05-31
The ITTF Staff to work together with the 2021 WTTC LOC on the evaluation of the impact of the current situation and potential scenarios.		

ACTION 20200415#15	In charge: Legal Counsel	Deadline: 2020-05-01
The Legal Counsel to study the possibility of separating the Constitutional Meetings, such as AGM and BoD, from the WTTC and offer guidance regarding the legal steps taken to ensure such action.		

8.5 WR Working Group

Ms Eleftheriade gave a brief update on the process and the work done by the WR Working Group and their evaluation as presented in the WR Report submitted by the WR Manager in relation to the players affected by travel restrictions due to COVID-19 in the events held in March. The report consisted of a comprehensive study, including the list of the players affected by the travel restrictions and the simulations of the different case scenarios.

Ms Eleftheriade reported that following the analysis, the majority of the WR working group recommended not to award any courtesy points to those players affected by the last-minute travel restrictions.

Ms Eleftheriade indicated that if the EC agrees on the recommendation, the April 2020 WR lists will be prepared accordingly, however, the WR working group acknowledged those cases which will be kept in consideration for future evaluation once the conditions and principles on how to unfreeze the ranking will be clearer. It was presumed some decisions taken at that time will resolve directly or indirectly those issues.

Mrs Eleftheriade stated that it was correct to assume that more similar situations and travel restrictions might occur in the future, once the international activities resume, therefore, a standard approach should be adopted in the future.

The WR working Groups offered alternative options in case the EC would decide to award courtesy points for their own reasons.

Mr Dainton stated that although he was initially of the opinion that courtesy points should be awarded under these extraordinary circumstances, he recognised the rigorous process and the work done by the Competition Department, the Athletes Commission and the WR Working Group, and hoped it would be seen as an acceptable solution.

Mr Weikert mentioned that he was in favour of following the recommendation of the WR working group especially as the impact of such decision on the WR was minimal. Mr Weikert stated that from a legal point of view the ITTF has the authority to establish an exception and not a precedent.

Dr Meshref, debated the decision not to award courtesy points to those players affected by travel restrictions, mentioning that once the April WR list will be published, the decision will be final for those specific cases. Based on this approach, Dr Meshref considered that no further evaluation should be possible for these and any future cases and he was of the strong opinion that the same approach should be used as a standard procedure.

Dr Meshref argued that in the future the ITTF might face similar situations as travel restrictions may occur and it would not be fair using different approaches. Dr Meshref felt that all cases should be treated equally, regardless of the origin or playing level of the players nor the impact on the WR.

Mr Dainton highlighted that the possibility of facing travel restrictions will exist and the WR working group should set a strong precedent on the decisions taken.

Mr Primorac suggested to follow and trust the recommendation of the WR working group.

Dr Meshref accepted the WR group recommendation but making emphasis that such decision should not be modified in the future as ITTF will look weak as institution and insisted that this decision should be set as a precedent.

The EC decided to agree with the recommendation of the WR working group in regard to April WR Lists.

20200415-EC-05

The Executive Committee decided to agree with the recommendation of the WR working group in regard to the April WR Lists.

ACTION 20200415#16	In charge: WR Manager	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To publish the April WR Lists following the decision of the EC.		

9. Any other business

9.1 CAS update

Mr Weikert updated the EC on the CAS appeal of Mr Sharara, indicating that the hearing at CAS is scheduled on 14th -16th July. However, both parties are discussing about a potential settlement meeting via video conference in May.

Mr Al-Mohannadi suggested that all the EC members should be attending the online conference meeting, and Mr Weikert proposed that only 1 or 2 should be allowed to speak with the rest, only listening.

Mr Weikert agreed with the proposal of Mr Al-Mohannadi and indicated that given the particularities and the procedures of such meeting, it was important to define the protocol and a communication system throughout the meeting.

ACTION 20200415#17	In charge: EC	Deadline: 2020-05-01
To define the protocol and a communication system throughout the potential settlement meeting with Mr Sharara.		

9.2 The CEO Letter "A Silver Lining in the COVID-19 Crisis"

Mr Dainton made a reference to the letter which he sent in the previous days in which he expressed his personal reflexions and ideas in regard to the future of the sport.

Mr Dainton stated that although some of the ideas had not been discussed with the EC members, something that could be improved in the future, he still felt that some of the provocative ideas would open some debates which will be of benefit for table tennis.

Mr Dainton was positively surprised with the media outcome as he never expected such a strong media reaction.

Mr Weikert agreed with the statement of the Mr Dainton and expressed his gratitude towards him for sending the letter, which was overall much appreciated and was perceived to receive a great media exposure.

10. Next EC Meeting

The Next Executive Committee meeting to be held on 1st May 2020.

11. Adjournment

Without further subjects, the meeting was adjourned at 14h30 CEST.

Thomas Weikert
ITTF President

Date

Raul Calin
ITTF Secretary General

Date