

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Video Conference  
9<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## Minutes

### 1. Welcome and Opening

#### 1.1 President's opening remarks

The President, Mr Thomas Weikert, thanked everyone for the fast reaction and welcomed them to the emergency EC meeting.

#### 1.2 Roll Call

Thomas Weikert	ITTF President
Khalil Al-Mohannadi	ITTF 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

Apologies	
Shi Zhihao	Executive Vice-President

### 2. Minutes of the previous Executive Committee meeting (only for reference)

With the emergency meeting having been called with short notice, and having received the draft of the previous Meeting Minutes just one day before, it was agreed that the adoption of the minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2020 EC Meeting will be deferred to the next EC meeting to be held on 2nd June 2020.

### 3. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted by the EC with the addition of the point 7.1 World Table Tennis.

#### 4. ITTF public image and unity during COVID-2019 crisis

In reference to the discussions held at the end of the last EC meeting, in relation with the open letter that was sent by the ITTF Deputy President, Mr Khalil Al-Mohannadi, and the EVP of Finance, Mrs Petra Sörling on 24<sup>th</sup> April, Mr Weikert presented clarifications in relation to the following points:

- a. Mr Weikert indicated that in both occasions (October 2019 and February 2020), it was a mistake from his side to announce his candidacy for the 2021 Presidency without previously discussing it individually with each of the EC members and apologized for doing so. Mr Weikert mentioned the calls held during the previous days with most of the EC members in order to clarify this matter.
- b. Mr Weikert indicated that using the terminology "civil law and criminal law", in his statement in reference to "examining the legal implications under the ITTF Constitution" was not done in a reasonable, good manner and apologized to the EC members for the perceived outcome that might result from such statement. Mr Weikert clarified that, from his perspective as a lawyer, he was suggesting taking into consideration the assessment of the law, and there was no intention to make it sound like a threat.
- c. Mr Weikert stated that the open letter that was sent by Mr Al-Mohannadi and Mrs Petra Sörling contained three statements, (1) "lack of leadership", (2) "contacting National Associations for election purposes" and (3) his mention about running only one mandate in 2017. From Mr Weikert's point of view, this was bad for the image of the ITTF and he would like to hear Mr Al-Mohannadi and Mrs Sörling if they have anything to comment.

Mr Al-Mohannadi thanked Dr Meshref for the idea of having this meeting and also thanked Mr Weikert for the clarifications provided. Mr Al-Mohannadi apologized for sending the open letter without informing Mr Weikert in particular and the rest of the EC members in advance. Mr Al-Mohannadi justified the open letter as a reaction to the February announcement, which was done - as mentioned by Mr Weikert - without discussing with the rest of the EC members, but wanted to turn page and emphasized that given the current COVID-19 crisis, the ITTF leadership needs to stay together and focus on working for the benefit of our sport.

Mr Weikert thanked Mr Al-Mohannadi for his words and expressed his desire to meet at the earliest possible occasion.

Mrs Sörling, mentioned being sad about the way the last EC meeting finished, as it was the first time in her eleven years on the ITTF EC to experience such situation at the end of a meeting. Mrs Sörling said that this experience, together with the announcement of Mr Weikert in February, without any team discussions, and other actions towards herself also in February (from Mr Weikert), and the calls with the National Associations from Mr Weikert were the reasons why, as the two most senior ITTF EC members (together with Mr Weikert), she and Mr Al-Mohannadi wanted to have this emergency EC meeting, trying to ensure everyone put's ITTF interest first, avoiding any election campaign during this period.

Mrs Sörling added following the statements of Mr Weikert, being also in favour to leave all these differences behind and move forward as a team.

Mr Weikert thanked Mrs Sörling for her words and invited the other EC colleagues to share their thoughts.

The EVP, Mr Nestor Tenca, thanked everyone for their remarks and while understanding the different political aspirations, mentioned being of the opinion that all stakeholders would expect that the EC members stop any actions related to the elections, at least until the COVID crisis is over.

Dr Meshref, appreciating the comments made, suggested to ensure the outcome of these discussions was being made in the form of a Press Release from the entire EC without any individual replies in the Media, prepared by the CEO and Secretary General.

Mr Weikert suggested to add a few points on the press release (Presidents regretting about not having announced internally his candidacy, Deputy President and EVP Finances regretting about their letter and a statement about the EC continuing their work together).

The CEO recommended instead to make a more generic press release without any individual reference nor with public apologies (what wouldn't sound ideal) and instead, enforcing the idea of the unity of the group. The staff will prepare a draft to be checked by the EC members.

Mrs Sörling agreed with Mr Dainton that it was good to look at what will be the best text for the ITTF.

Mr Weikert made the remark about the fact of the Member Associations having received allegations, and his aim being to ensure the Press Release clarifies in regard to the ITTF leadership being fine to the outside.

In turn, the other EC members, Mr Maehara, Mr Primorac, Mr Morris, Mr Burton and Mr Ryu showed their support to this aim for unity of the three senior EC members.

The Secretary General, Mr Raul Calin, commented on the Bangkok 2018 EC meeting and his final words about the necessity of having the ITTF staff as far as possible from any political matters. Mr Calin felt it was needed to bring this note to the table again and hoped that the EC members would take in consideration such remark. In particular, Mr Calin mentioned that the current times of COVID-19, with the ongoing projects and contingency plans having to be adopted, make more complicated for the staff to act as "mediators" between the EC members.

<b>ACTION 20200509#01</b>	<b>In charge: ITTF Media</b>	<b>Deadline: 2020-05-11</b>
<b>To prepare a draft of the Press Release as made in the last few weeks, but this time checking with the entire EC, due to the sensitivity.</b>		

## **5. Update on the ITTF Finances, especially Salaries & Honorarium**

The EC noted the progress made by the Senior Management in relation to the budget adjustments measures due to COVID-19, in particular in the HR area.

Based on the decision taken by the EC during the last meeting, Mr Dainton informed that on behalf of the CEO, Secretary General and the CFO, a letter was sent to all the staff, explaining the current situation and the actions required as next steps.

Mr Dainton reported that a Senior Management meeting was held on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> May, in order to help in finding solutions for each of the areas and departments and discuss the different ideas in regard to a future restructure. Mr Dainton added that with the intention of ensuring a corporate and professional approach, a guideline was created to help direct the actions to be taken.

Discussions were held in regard to the particularities of the ITTF staff structure and the differences of those employees located in countries where government support was available, and the staff hired as contractors that are not eligible for such funding and are fully reliant on the ITTF income.

Mr Weikert, noted the difficulty of trying to find a balance between professionalism, solidarity and equal treatment among all the staff, but it was important to keep the social responsibility and suggested to adopt a one-by-one decision type of approach.

Dr Meshref asked for clarifications in regard to the proposed 100% salary reduction for those staff members with 0% workload and stressed that such decision might have serious consequences for those staff or contractors that rely totally on the ITTF income. While understanding the business perspective, Dr Meshref felt important to take into consideration the human aspect and the social responsibility towards the people who served ITTF for a very long time.

Mr Dainton explained that that in the current situation, in some departments and areas, there is 0% activity, and following the example of other organisations and industries, when there is no business, the staff need to be put on unpaid leave.

Although admitting that this was the one of the hardest things he had to deal with in his career, Mr Dainton insisted that it was necessary to act as professional as possible and work on the best interest of the ITTF.

Mr Dainton explained that from a professional point of view, the finance team, has the mandate to propose the necessary measures in order to ensure a stronger financial position at the end of 2020 without any reliance on the ITTF reserves. As a CEO, Mr Dainton's preference was to adopt a prudent approach and take the necessary actions in order to protect the ITTF's Finances, especially in these times of uncertainty.

In case the EC would rather decide to adopt a socially responsible strategy, it is important to understand that that would mean using the ITTF reserves in 2020 and this would place the ITTF in a weaker financial position. Mr Dainton warned that this strategy would represent a greater risk because at the moment nobody knows how long this situation will be and when will international travel and businesses resume its activities.

Mrs Sörling reminded everyone that although there are different scenarios for the different sport organisations, and regardless of the positive signs, there was no certainty that the activity might resume in the months to come. Mrs Sörling also indicated that the revenues corresponding to the first half of the year were already lost, what puts the ITTF at risk in terms of financial stability.

Although in favour of keeping a focus on solidarity and security for the employees, Mrs Sörling emphasized that the financial situation was a reason of concern and it was important to take strong actions, thanking Mr Dainton for the hard work done in this regard.

Mr Calin mentioned that during the growth period, with very few exceptions, there was no involvement of the EC in the staff hiring, as this is a duty entrusted to the Management. As a consequence, Mr Calin questioned whether for consistency, it shouldn't be normal that the Management is also in charge of the necessary adjustments.

Although recognizing it was a sensitive situation, Mr Calin emphasized that it was important to always take a balanced and professional approach.

The CFO, Mr Michael Brown, gave a brief update on the background and the work done in relation to the HR adjustment measures. Mr Brown felt a strong need to take a decision as soon as possible explaining that the biggest concern is not knowing how long this situation will be prolonged.

Based the financial scenarios presented during the last EC meeting, Mr Brown indicated that in case no further events will be held in 2020, 87% of the revenues will be spend exclusively on HR and will result in a five (5) million USD loss by the end of a year.

Mr Brown also informed that without any further adjustments for the remainder of the year, while using the ITTF reserves, the longevity of ITTF becomes very difficult in this type of situation. Mr Brown mentioned that if the situation is being handled cautiously and trying to preserve the ITTF finances, there is a chance to come out of this situation in a relatively stable or potentially strong position.

Mr Brown emphasized that those that have access to the government support in Singapore Switzerland and Germany represent less than a third of the hired staff, and although it is appreciated, it is very limited in relation to the overall loss.

Following the example of other IF's that started to put staff on furlough, Mr Brown recommended that as the overall work of the ITTF is reducing, due to lack of events and international activities, the overall work force needs to reduce in line with that.

Mr Weikert mentioned that he was fully aware of the financial situation but insisted that the ITTF also has the social responsibility to protect the staff and reminded that it was necessary to take a reasonable decision while try to seek further resources.

Although appreciating the work done by the CFO and the EVP of Finances, Mr Weikert underlined that the decision on how to balance the risks has also political implications.

Mr Dainton pointed out that the ITTF finds itself in a fortunate position to count with a CFO among their professional staff as It is important to see the reality and even if the recommendations are hard the ITTF should take into account and appreciate the work done by the financial team. Mr Dainton also reminded that in recent discussions with the IOC, the work done by the ITTF was highly valued, especially for the prudent approached and measures adopted in this situation.

Mr Dainton assured that the recommendations and measures are taken in the best interest of table tennis and the ITTF, and expressed his preference towards a “short-term pain, long term gain” approach, as at the moment hard decisions are necessary in order to survive the crisis and secure a better long-term situation. This was also meant in the best interest of the staff for the long term.

In regard to the Honorarium, the President claimed that his involvement in the ITTF activity should be considered a full-time job and made a brief summary on his day-to-day workload. Mr Weikert suggested a reduction of his Honorarium in line with the Senior Management, i.e., 25% reduction.

In the absence of the President and the Staff, the rest of the EC present discussed the situation of the President’s Honorarium.

The EC unanimously decided to reduce the Honorarium of the President to 25% until the end of the pandemic period.

#### **20200509-EC-01**

The Executive Committee decided unanimously to decrease the President’s honorarium to 25% (2000 EURO) from the 1 June 2020 until the end of the Covid-19 pandemic period.

#### **6. Update on CAS – Adham Sharara**

Mr Weikert updated the EC on the CAS appeal of Mr Sharara following the pre-meeting held with the ITTF Lawyers, Mr Rigozzi and Mrs Frey on 6th May 2020, with a reference to the potential terms of negotiation to be used during the settlement meeting which were already shared with the rest of the EC.

Mr Weikert apologised for the misunderstanding regarding the attendance of the EC members at the pre-meeting and as well as some miscommunication regarding the late distribution of the documents relevant to the case.

The EC defined the protocol and communication system to be used throughout the settlement meeting on Monday 11th May at 2pm CEST with the confirmation of Mr Weikert and Mr Dainton as the two speakers from the ITTF side under the guidance of Mr Rigozzi.

Mr Weikert informed that a request in regard to the participation of the EC members to the online settlement meeting will be sent by Mr Rigozzi to the other party for approval. He also stated that based on his experience, recording the meeting might not be possible due to the nature of the settlement meeting.

Mr Weikert indicated that a pre-meeting will be scheduled with the ITTF lawyers, Mr Rigozzi and Mrs Frey, 30 minutes prior to settlement meeting in order to discuss the particularities of the

case, allowing the EC members to raise question regarding technicalities as well as strengths and weaknesses of the case.

Mr Calin confirmed that an extract of the most relevant documents has been shared with all the EC members the day before and apologised for not doing so earlier.

Mr Calin wanted also to give some context to the situation in relation to the documents of the CAS case of Mr Sharara. Mr Calin explained that when Mr Weikert sent the so called "Rejoinder" (the response sent by the ITTF lawyer to CAS following Mr Sharara's appeal to the EC members), all the attachments (called "Exhibits") were not included, as they were over 100 documents. Those documents, as explained the night before, being now available on the ITTF EC Members documents portal.

Mr Burton asked to confirm if the EC Members would be allowed to attend muted the session with Mr Sharara, and Mr Weikert confirmed it was the case.

Dr Meshref thanked Mr Calin for the work done making the documents available, as now the EC members could see all the details of the case. Dr Meshref also wanted to add that, same as the entire EC entrusted the group (Mr Weikert, Mr Burton, Mr Dainton, Mr Calin and Mr Brown), for the operative handling of the case, giving the group their trust, he would expect the trust to be mutual towards the EC members, making reference to comments received from Mr Weikert in Budapest about potential communications of EC Members with Mr Sharara.

Dr Meshref stated that since the case went to CAS, his only contact with Mr Sharara was limited to festivities mutual congratulations, like Christmas and Ramadan, and it wouldn't make sense for any EC member to leak information to Mr Sharara, nor to anyone to think that it was the case.

The situation of the Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May meeting, with the EC members not being invited to take part with on the pre-meeting with Mr Rigozzi, contrary to what expressed on the 1<sup>st</sup> May meeting, was making Dr Meshref feeling uncomfortable, hence the insistence on the importance of the mutual trust, and therefore, Dr Meshref wanted to clarify his position and observations.

On a personal note, Dr Meshref mentioned the sacrifices and opportunities lost for him and for his family due to the CAS case and stated he would never accept any kind of corruption, or in general, any actions against good governance during this term as ITTF EC member.

To conclude, Dr Meshref thanked for the opportunity to interact with Mr Rigozzi thirty minutes before the meeting with Mr Sharara and hoped for the best possible outcome.

Mrs Sörling asked Mr Weikert his opinion on the case as a lawyer, and whether it would be better to make a settlement or not.

Mr Weikert explained that it is a difficult case because of the issues mentioned regarding the ITTF constitution, as the specific clauses utilised for the suspension were not in force at the moment when the allegations occurred. However, Mr Weikert indicated that the ITTF lawyer suggested the ITTF is in a strong position based on the facts, and further actions can be taken in civil court even if CAS rules in favour of Mr Sharara.

Mr Weikert added that in the event that the case would be lost, this would happen based on technicalities, but then, the facts and exhibits of the case can be made public, and they are very strong.

Mr Dainton indicated that the ITTF should take into consideration the relevance of the case in the context of COVID-19 crisis, which in the overall situation is quite minimal and less important than when initiated.

Mr Dainton was of the opinion that it was necessary to evaluate the impact of the case from different perspectives as well as taking into consideration the financial implications. Mr Dainton questioned if the ITTF should spend more funds on lawyers while dealing with staff reduction measures, or if more time should be spent on building the case, instead of working on finding solutions on how to overcome the crisis.

Mr Dainton referred to the CAS case of Mr Mutko vs IOC, which could be eventually used as a reference for our case, but insisted on the opinion of Mr Rigozzi that, even if this precedent would be against ITTF, the facts would be embarrassing for Mr Sharara if becoming public.

The EC confirmed the plans for the settlement meeting on the appeal through the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) of the former Honorary President, Mr Adham Sharara.

## 20200509-EC-02

The EC confirmed the settlement meeting procedures ahead of the eventual CAS hearing for the appeal of Mr Adham Sharara against the ITTF EC decision to suspend him.

<b>ACTION 20200509#02</b>	<b>In charge: Secretary General</b>	<b>Deadline: 2020-05-10</b>
<b>To inform the Associate of Mr Rigozzi, Mrs Frey, of the details of the EC members that will be in attendance to the pre-meeting and meeting with the Appellant, to coordinate the technical details.</b>		

## 7. Any other business

### 7.1 World Table Tennis (WTT) update

Mrs Sörling mentioned that in the current COVID-19 context, there have been many questions raised in regard to the future, especially following the WTT launch a few months ago.

With the WTT in Busan being postponed, Mrs Sörling proposed to schedule an online WTT information session / digital forum for different stakeholders where they can have access to information and have a chance to ask questions.

Mr Dainton mentioned that the original idea was to have a WTT Forum in Busan in the month of March, during the World Championships, but with the postponement of the event, the plans had to be adjusted and an online WTT info session will be announced in the coming days, to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020.



<b>ACTION 20200509#03</b>	<b>In charge: WTT</b>	<b>Deadline: 2020-05-20</b>
<b>To schedule an online WTT Info Session for the different stakeholders.</b>		

Mr Maehara expressed his concern about the lack of information in relation to the WTT World Ranking system and suggested that a decision should be taken as soon as possible.

Mr Dainton promised to check with the WTT technical team on the status of the WTT WR and will present an update during the next EC meeting.

The AC Chair, Mr Zoran Primorac, indicated that the WR Manager, Mr Javier Angulo, is working on the system and the WR group developing the system includes two Athlete representatives.

<b>ACTION 20200509#04</b>	<b>In charge: WTT</b>	<b>Deadline: 2020-06-02</b>
<b>To update on the status of the WTT WR.</b>		

## 8. Adjournment

Without further points the Executive Committee Meeting was adjourned at 20h00 CEST.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Weikert  
ITTF President

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Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Raul Calin  
ITTF Secretary General

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Date