

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Video Conference
28th February 2021

Minutes

1. Welcome and Opening

1.1 President's opening remarks

The President, Mr Thomas Weikert, welcomed everyone and started the meeting without any further remarks.

1.2 Roll Call

Thomas Weikert	ITTF President
Khalil Al-Mohannadi	Executive Committee Member
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

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted with the addition of the point:

- 6.1 Letter to the ITTF President
- 6.2 Report from Doha

3. 2021 WTT ME Hub Report

The ITTF CEO, Mr Steve Dainton updated the EC on the 2021 WTT Middle East Hub which includes a series of four events: 2 x WTT Events (WTT Contender and WTT Star Contender), the World Singles Qualification Tournament for the Olympic Games (WSQT) and the Asian Olympic Qualification Tournament (AOQT). Mr Dainton indicated that all visas were successfully issued, and all participants arrived safely in Doha.

The EC noted that the COVID-19 Protocol include testing prior to arrival, on arrival and during the events to ensure the safety of all participants inside the bubble as follows:

- 7 days pre-departure PCR test
- 72 hours pre-departure PCR test
- Test on arrival to Hammad International Airport in Doha
- Test every six (6) days as per the requirements of the Ministry of Public Health of Qatar

Mr Dainton informed that as a result of the pre-departure testing, two participants resulted in positive cases and didn't travel to Qatar. To date, all the tests done upon arrival and inside the bubble were negative.

Mr Dainton also reported several minor issues that occurred in terms of operations, informing that a meeting was held together with the key senior staff on site to help in finding solutions for the situations arising.

Mr Dainton also informed that new regulations and additional safety rules have been introduced following the concerns raised by the players in relation to the implementation of the safety protocol in the training venue.

Mr Dainton made a call to the players and all participants to be responsible, to cooperate and strictly follow the COVID-19 Guidelines:

- the participants and officials are only allowed to move within the hotel rooms, dining areas, and sport hall
- the use of the extra hotel facilities such as the swimming pool, beach or gym are strictly prohibited (a gym is available at the venue)
- to respect safety measures at all times (safety distancing measures, wearing mask at all times, etc.)
- to follow the regular testing procedure

Mr Dainton was happy to be able to host again international table tennis events in such a very nice venue and counting with the participation of over three hundred (300) international players.

Although COVID-19 was still a global problem which led to the cancellation of many international sporting events, Mr Al-Mohannadi indicated that the Local Organising Committee (LOC) was doing its best to ensure a successful organisation of the first official WTT events, which are also the first official international tournaments since the #RESTART in November in China.

Mr Al-Mohannadi informed that a total of seven hundred (700) participants, from which more than three hundred were players, arrived safely to Doha, and reported that no positive case was registered so far. Mr Al-Mohannadi emphasized that stricter measures will be enforced for those participants that don't respect the regulations. In welcoming everyone to Doha, Mr Al-Mohannadi wished everyone to enjoy the event and the hospitality at some of the best five-star hotels and the state-of-the-art venues.

The EC noted the letter sent by the AC Deputy Chairs, Ms Galia Dvorak and Ms Dana Cehova, and ETTU Athletes Commission member, Mr Paul Drinkhall, which reported some of the issues and concerns raised by the players in Doha.

The AC Chair, Mr Zoran Primorac, thanked Mr Al-Mohannadi and everyone else involved in the organisation of the events in Doha in these difficult circumstances. Mr Primorac praised the work done by the ITTF & WTT to ensure that international table tennis was re-starting and acknowledged that it was not easy to manage an event with 700 participants.

Mr Primorac reported some of the complaints and concerns raised by the players participating at the 2021 WTT ME Hub in Doha with the main goal being to fix the issues, so that the players can focus on their matches. Following the initial communication sent to the relevant involved parties, Mr Primorac was happy to see the prompt reactions of the LOC and the staff on site to help fix some of the problems. Mr Primorac also reported some of pending issues related to the event schedule and the IT.

Mr Weikert stated that the athletes cannot be blamed as the ITTF is responsible of the implementation of the COVID-19 Guidelines and it is essential to ensure that there are no issues regarding the safety of the participants.

Mr Burton indicated that many of the issues on site seemed to have been solved in a reasonable manner thanks to the prompt reaction of the staff on site, and that on his opinion, it was very important the message in terms of cooperation and shared responsibilities.

Mrs Sörling trusted that those members that are responsible of this matter will successfully manage these issues. Mrs Sörling emphasized that all the issues were eventually solved on site. In her view, the most important fact was the need for cooperation as the entire table tennis community was still facing a global pandemic.

It was agreed to circulate the letters received to the entire EC, so they could read them.

ACTION 20210228#01	In charge: SG	Deadline: 2021-03-14
To share the letters sent by the AC representatives to the EC.		

In reference, to the ITTF Deputy President position, Mr Al-Mohannadi mentioned that due to his very busy schedule organising the 2021 WTT Middle East Hub, he had no time to deal with these allegations and indicated that he will engage a lawyer and will officially reply after the end of the last event held in Doha.

Mr Al-Mohannadi emphasized that Mr Weikert's unilateral decision to remove him from the position of Deputy President and the distribution of the letter with the decision to the MAs may jeopardise the events being held during the 2021 WTT Middle East Hub.

The EC noted that such actions may have serious repercussions in Qatar, his home country, where he is leading together with the support of the Qatar Olympic Committee, the organisation of a series of events with over seven hundred participants.

Mr Al-Mohannadi mentioned that Mr Weikert, in his capacity as ITTF President, never offered his support and help to himself and the Qatar Table Tennis Association (QTTA) to host the events in Doha, especially in this very special circumstances. In his opinion this was not the right attitude and approach of a President and leader.

Mr Weikert clarified that he didn't send any public information to the media and it was his task to communicate his decision to the MAs.

Mr Weikert considered that the anonymous email regarding the eligibility of the Deputy President was a separate matter which should be discussed at a later stage.

4. Second WG report (relations with European Members Associations) on DTTB Letter

4.1 Summary of the meeting held on 10th February with the ETTU

The EC noted the report made by the second WG (relations with European MA's) including a summary of the meeting held together with ETTU EB representatives and European MA's representatives on 10th of February 2021.

Mr Weikert indicated that during the meetings the WG confirmed that there will be no clash between any ITTF and WTT events with the ETTU Championships in Cluj in September 2021.

Mr Weikert informed about the technical issues that were raised during the meeting such as:

- Event Calendar
- World Ranking
- the lack of international events held in Europe in 2021

Mr Primorac noted that positive discussions were held through this 2nd meeting and was glad to know that the ETTU President, Mr Igor Levitin, and eventually the ETTU Deputy President, Mr Pedro Moura, will be traveling to Doha to discuss in person with ITTF and WTT Officials and Staff.

In Mr Primorac's view, it was important to solve all the problems with Europe as it was one of the best continents in table tennis.

Mrs Sörling reminded that the mandate given by the EC to the second WG had been the improvement of the communication and relations with European MAs, and she believed that solving some of the technical aspects specified by the ETTU will also help achieve that goal.

The EC decided to include the ITTF CEO, Mr Steve Dainton, in the second WG (relations with European MAs).

Mr Calin clarified that the invitation of Mr Levitin to Doha was not a consequence of the work done by the WG, but an invitation extended by Mr Al-Mohannadi a long time before.

Mr Weikert emphasized the importance of maintaining a relation with ETTU Officials to solve the institutional problems and insisted that the ITTF and WTT should invest in Europe and try to have international events in Europe. Following the recommendation made by Mr Primorac in the previous meeting, Mr Weikert suggested to initiate discussions with Croatian Table Tennis Association and other countries in the Balkans region.

Mrs Sörling stressed the importance of addressing the matter of events in Europe, emphasizing that the decision to appoint Mr Jonny Cowan as the new WTT European General Manager was a good step in that direction.

Dr Meshref mentioned that although Europe is an important continent, the ITTF is responsible for the global development of table tennis. In terms of participation, Dr Meshref mentioned that each continent is confronting with quite different issues, and not everything that is best for Europe would apply in other continents. Dr Meshref considered that the other continents should also be included in discussions to ensure that the ITTF is not only serving the interest of one continent in the detriment of the others. Dr Meshref appreciated very much the importance for the staff to be involved in discussions with the continents and the inclusion of the ITTF CEO in the second WG.

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The Executive Committee decided to include the ITTF CEO, Mr Steve Dainton in the second WG (relations with European MAs).

Dr Meshref reminded that the Master License Agreement (MLA) between ITTF and WTT includes a provision in relation to the creation of a Steering Committee (SC) consisting of two ITTF members and two WTT members with the scope to discuss among other things, the WR.

Dr Meshref recommended to consider the activation of the SC.

Mr Dainton mentioned that after the #RESTART there was a feeling that it will be possible to organise some international events in different parts of the world. With that purpose, discussions were held with Swedish Table Tennis Association (STTA) regarding the organisation of an event in Sweden prior to the Olympic Games, however, eventually that seems no longer possible.

Following the official announcement of Mr Jonny Cowan as the new WTT Europe General Manager, discussions will be held with the European MAs to explore the possibility of hosting events in Europe in 2021.

From a table tennis market perspective, Mr Dainton stated that in China, in Japan, and in very few other countries the ITTF is able to generate revenues, while in the rest of the countries the situation is very difficult. In order to have a global product, it will be necessary to invest in different countries and continents. Mr Dainton explained that COVID-19 has dramatically slowed down the process but that the DTTB Letter had even a bigger negative impact on the negotiations held with different stakeholders and partners.

Mr Dainton emphasized that it was urgent to solve the strategic event calendar which was crucial for the continental bodies, MAs, national and international leagues.

In regard to the concerns raised about the lack of second and third tier of events, intended for the middle and lower ranked players, Mr Dainton clarified that the process to present these events structure was slowed down due to COVID-19.

4.2 Letter received from ETTU EC

Mr Weikert indicated that although most of the things mentioned in the letter sent by the ETTU EB seemed to have been solved, the World Ranking regulations were still on the agenda.

Further discussions to be held during the EC meeting in Doha.

4.3 Letter received from Belgium

Mr Weikert indicated that the letter sent by the Belgian Table Tennis Association raised some serious concerns regarding participation costs and hospitality rates at the 2021 WTT ME Hub. Furthermore, he outlined that middle class players cannot participate in many of the WTT events.

Further discussions to be held during the EC meeting in Doha.

5. **First WG report (legal)**

Dr Meshref gave a brief summary on the work done by the WG (legal) and the next steps following the decision on 17th February to pursue Option 1 and 5.

5.1 Remedy actions towards ITTF, ITTF EC and ITTF Staff

Option 1

The EC noted that a questionnaire was sent to a list of staff that were affected by the accusations made in DTTB letter in order to get their feedback on how ITTF can remedy the impact caused by such statements.

In regard to the questionnaire that was sent to the staff, Mr Calin referred to the feedback from one of the staff, suggesting that he wasn't sure the EC is aware of the psychological and emotional impact that the staff is going throughout as a consequence of the DTTB Letter.

Mr Calin outlined that it was important for the staff to feel the full support of the EC members.

Mrs Sörling expressed her worries regarding the pressure and stress felt by the staff in these extraordinary circumstances and indicated that she already raised these concerns in an email addressed to the Human Resources Manager, Ms Charlotte Lourdes.

Dr Meshref considered that it was fundamental for the staff to feel that they have the full support of the EC emphasized that it was also the duty of the EC to address the concerns raised by the Staff and help them regain their motivation.

5.2 Letter to DTTB

Option 5

Dr Meshref informed that a draft of the letter is being finalised and pending on the approval of the EC, to be sent to the DTTB. Based on DTTB's response other options may be pursued and eventual sanctions may be seek.

Dr Meshref reported that an official direct communication channel will be established through email between the WG and the DTTB. Dr Meshref felt that as an EC, it was impossible to get over this without a serious acknowledgement from DTTB side of what happened.

Mr Calin emphasized that the DTTB Letter stated a series of serious accusations against the ITTF, ITTF EC and CEO and following the publishment of the PwC Conclusions document it was now the time to take action and try to finalise this matter as soon as possible.

Mr Calin stated that the DTTB needed to understand the consequences and the negative impact caused by their actions. He considered that it was important to engage in a serious conversation to ensure that all the steps taken by the EC are in the best benefit of ITTF and Table Tennis.

Mr Calin thanked the WG members for the professional work done with the support of PwC and for dedicating so much time and energy especially in these special circumstances.

6. Table Tennis Canada and Mr Paul Kyle

The EC noted the report done by the ITTF Legal Counsel, Mr Dylan Mah, in regard to the complaints made by Table Tennis Canada and Paul Kyle.

In regard to the complaint made by Table Tennis Canada (TTCAN), Mr Weikert indicated that at the moment there were two legal opinions:

- An evaluation made by Mr Cavaliero
- A summary presented by the ITTF Legal Counsel, Mr Dylan Mah

Mr Weikert reminded that the recommendation resulted from the initial evaluation let by Mr Cavaliero was to open an investigation in order to determine if the ITTF North America Office is acting like an office or as a confederation.

With respect to the complaints made by Mr Paul Kyle, Mr Weikert considered that the accusations made were not that serious.

Mr Burton, in relation to the accusations form TTCAN, mentioned his potential perceived COI and declared he would abstain.

As already stated in a previous email sent in relation to this case, Mr Tenca indicated that the complains from Table Tennis Canada were initiated from a wrong assumption that the ITTF North America was acting as a continental federation. As it was already clarified that the ITTF NA was in fact an ITTF continental office with absolutely no relation to NATTU, Mr Tenca was of the opinion that the accusations made by TT Canada have no grounds.

With respect to the complaints made by Mr Paul Kyle, Mr Tenca insisted that the accusations are failing to have a ground and have no other prof than his own declarations and statements.

Mr Tenca emphasized that the EC cannot keep these cases active for such a long-time as it is only causing unnecessary problems for the ITTF and for the staff. Furthermore, the EC already

received the legal opinion of Mr Mah, which was concluding that there are no reasons to question the actions of the ITTF CEO.

Based on the discussions held among the members, it was clear that it was necessary to take an immediate decision on whether the process should continue or the complaints should be dismissed.

Following the expert legal opinion of Mr Tenca and Mr Mah, Dr Meshref considered that it was now necessary to close these cases and inform the two complainers, TTCAN and Mr Paul Kyle, that their accusations were dismissed.

Dr Meshref outlined that the engagement of Mr Cavaliero was not done through a formal process nor following any EC decision, adding that the EC should follow the normal process as per the ITTF regulations and oblige to the opinion of the ITTF Legal Counsel.

Mr Weikert explained that Mrs Sörling and himself decided to engage Mr Cavaliero as an external independent expert, based on the assumption that Mr Mah would not be able to make a decision regarding his boss.

Mr Morris asked if there was any private correspondence between Mr Weikert and Mr Paul Kyle without the EC knowledge. Moreover, Mr Morris warned that based on the previous experience it was clear that Mr Kyle will not stop here.

Mr Weikert informed that he only replied acknowledging the receipt of the email, however, without confirming that there was or not or any internal or external evaluation.

Following the discussions held among the members, the EC decided to take a vote in favour of the closure of the two cases.

Table Tennis Canada complaints

In favour of closing: Mr Khalil Al-Mohannadi, Mrs Petra Sörling, Mr James Morris, Mr Maehara Masahiro, Mr Shi Zhihao, Dr Alaa Meshref, Mr Nestor Tenca, Mr Ryu Seungmin, Mr Zoran Primorac

Abstentions: Mr Bruce Burton, due to a perceived conflict of interest, and Mr Thomas Weikert.

Mr Paul Kyle's complaint

In favour of closing: Mr Thomas Weikert, Mr Khalil Al-Mohannadi, Mrs Petra Sörling, Mr Bruce Burton, Mr Maehara Masahiro, Mr Shi Zhihao, Dr Alaa Meshref, Mr Nestor Tenca, Mr Ryu Seungmin, Mr Zoran Primorac.

Against: None

Abstentions: Mr James Morris, due to a perceived conflict of interest.

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The Executive Committee decided to close the case and dismiss the accusation brought by Table Tennis Canada.

20210228-EC-03

The Executive Committee decided to close the case and dismiss the accusation brought by Mr Paul Kyle against the CEO.

Mr Dainton expressed that ever since he started his career within the organisation, he always acted in the best interest of ITTF. He considered when receiving letters against any official or staff member, the EC should follow the right process and procedures as per ITTF rules and regulations. This kind of situation can happen to anyone and may have severe legal consequences.

Mr Dainton was surprised by the fact that Mr Weikert abstained in the matter related to Table Tennis Canada. Based on a previous discussion, Mr Dainton had the impression that Mr Weikert was willing to close the case as he ensured that the ITTF will cover any related cost.

Mr Weikert considered that the complaint made by Table Tennis Canada required further legal investigations. In reference to the legal costs, Mr Weikert indicated that there is always the threat that the EC Members and Staff are being sued by the external people as a result of their duties, the ITTF should cover the necessary costs.

7. Any other business

7.1 Letter to the President

The Secretary General was asked to read on behalf of the Executive Vice-Presidents an open letter addressed to the ITTF President.

"Dear Thomas Weikert,

At the last ITTF Executive Committee meeting on the 17th of February 2021, in your opening speech, you stated: "By the way everyone is entitled and also obliged to express criticism if something does not suit him or her. And to conclude that point, if you don't want to support me, just say so. I will know where I stand".

With this letter the ITTF Executive Vice Presidents wish to officially inform you that you no longer have our complete trust, confidence and support. We no longer believe that you are working in the best interests of the International Table Tennis Federation.

The actions you have taken and continue to take especially as regards not engaging with us in any meaningful way, as your supposed trusted colleagues, and not following the regular and formal processes of the ITTF are such that we no longer believe nor trust that you represent this Executive Committee in the best interest of the ITTF.

Furthermore, in an extremely complicated and challenging time for our sport during this pandemic period the role of a President should be to, amongst other things, unify the Executive Committee and act as a positive role model in leading by example to propose workable solutions to our ongoing difficulties. The only thing you are bringing is conflict and negativity.

As you know, following the unilateral removal by you of Khalil Al-Mohannadi as Deputy President, you are now obliged to fill that position from one of the Executive Vice Presidents as per Article 1.5.4.2 of the ITTF Constitution that stipulates the composition of the Executive Committee. In this regard and given the contents of this letter, we also inform you that under the current circumstances none of the below signatories wish to work with you as Deputy President. Therefore, the position of Deputy President would remain vacant in breach of Article 1.5.4.2 of the ITTF Constitution.

The following actions, inter alia, are the main reasons for us to take this position:

- *Unilaterally deciding how to move forward and not involving the Working Group nor receiving Executive Committee approval in the lifting of the suspension of the former President.*
- *Not following the ITTF process as regards the following complaints including:*
 - o *The Paul Kyle complaints*
 - o *The Table Tennis Canada Complaints*
(In both of the above cases ignoring the majority of the Executive Committee)
 - o *The Anonymous email*
- *Demanding that the CEO not perform his duties at the Board of Directors Meeting without any Executive Committee consultation.*
- *Providing an interview to the Allgemeine Zeitung on the 4th of December 2020 and, in doing so, completely ignoring the decision of the Executive Committee that any communication should be via the first Working Group.*
- *Your conflict of interest with DTTB that we all now believe is severely adversely affecting the positive work of this Executive Committee and the ITTF.*
- *Your removal of Khalil Al-Mohannadi as Deputy President has left the position vacant contrary to Article 1.5.4.2 of the ITTF Constitution that stipulates the composition of the Executive Committee.*

In conclusion, the ITTF Executive Vice Presidents regrettably do not support you any longer and we will be considering our next steps in the coming days.

ITTF Executive Vice Presidents”.

Mr Weikert had no comments with respect to the letter as this was the first time to hear these statements. Mr Weikert added that he had not received any information prior to the meeting and requested for the letter to be sent officially to him so he can read it and react accordingly.

Mr Weikert's asked what the EC was expecting after sending such letter and outlined that regardless of the opinion of the other EC members, he is still the President elected by the AGM.

Mr Burton fully endorsed the letter sent on behalf of the Executive Vice-Presidents which should now be forwarded to the ITTF President.

Mr Al-Mohannadi asked Mr Weikert what his opinion regarding the content of the letter was, as it was clearly stating the fact that the President had no support from the other EC members.

Dr Meshref stated that it was the right of the EC to express their opinion and criticism and said that Mr Weikert's also had the right not to respond in reference to several statements mentioned in the letter.

Mr Tenca indicated that the EC members lost the confidence in their President and expected that this letter would help Mr Weikert to reflect on his actions and try to find a way to work as a team in order to overcome this crisis and ensure that this situation doesn't affect the development of the ITTF.

Mrs Sörling fully supported the letter as she considered that it was very important to follow good practices and to have a leadership that is working in the best interest of table tennis. Mrs Sörling emphasized that the EC should work for the sport of table tennis instead of wasting time and money on political matters.

Mr Morris totally supported the letter and expressed his frustrations in terms of actual actions and processes. Mr Morris criticised Mr Weikert for not following the best practices and processes and for not engaging with the other EC members.

Mr Ryu Seungmin expressed his frustration and disappointment with the recent events and considered that the EC were wasting a lot of time arguing internally among each other. In his view, it was the responsibility of the EC to contribute to the development of the table tennis. In the meantime, an international event was happening in Qatar and all around the world the players suffer many challenges due to the global pandemic, and Mr Ryu asked the President and the EVP to please find a reasonable solution to solve these internal issues.

Mr Primorac also expressed his disappointed with the fact that the political agenda took over the interests of ITTF and asked the EC to try to find a solution and work together in the best interest of table tennis. Mr Primorac hoped that the EC will be able to fulfil its mandate in the best interest of the sport, the members and the athletes.

Mr Al-Mohannadi told Mr Weikert to reflect on what was the main reason and cause of this division between the EC members.

Mr Maehara Masahiro expressed his will to work together as a united EC.

Mr Shi Zhihao expressed that in these difficult and challenging times, when the whole world is confronting a global pandemic, it was fundamental for the table tennis family, especially the ITTF EC, to work together in the best interest of the sport.

8. Adjournment

Without further points the Executive Committee Meeting was adjourned at 14:20 pm (CET time).

9. Next EC Meeting

The next EC meeting to be held on 13th and/or 14th March.

Thomas Weikert
ITTF President

Date

Raul Calin
ITTF Secretary General

Date