

ITTF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Hybrid format
Monday 29th November 2021 – 09h00 – 12h00 CST

Minutes

EC members in attendance:

SÖRLING Petra	ITTF President
AL-MOHANNADI Khalil	Executive Vice-President
AZEVEDO Alaor	Executive Vice-President
LIU Guoliang	Executive Vice-President
MAEHARA Masahiro	Executive Vice-President
MESHREF Alaa	Executive Vice-President
NATRAN Roland	Executive Vice-President
OSHODI Wahid	Executive Vice-President
SYMONS Graham	Executive Vice-President
PRIMORAC Zoran	Athletes Commission (AC) Chair
RYU Seung-Min	IOC Member

Staff in attendance:

DAINTON Steve	ITTF Group CEO
CALIN Raul	ITTF Secretary General

Invited staff (in order of intervention):

POUND Matt	WTT Director (sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)
OLVECH Leandro	ITTF Foundation Director (sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 7)
BROWN Michael	ITTF Group CFO (sections 1, 2, 3, 4)
BESSAH Mounir	ITTF Member Relations Director (sections 1, 2, 3, 4)
CEHOVIN Polona	ITTF HPD & Education Director (sections 1, 2, 3, 4)
FELEGYI Gabor	ITTF Competitions Director (sections 1, 2, 3, 4)
HERWEG Claudia	ITTF Head of Equipment (sections 1, 2, 3, 4)
LE FLOC'H Philippe	WTT Senior Commercial Strategy Consultant (sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)
KOH Kimberly	WTT Senior Partnerships Director (sections 1, 2, 3, 4)
LAVIER Tristan	ITTF Group Head of Communications (sections 1, 2, 3, 4)
NECULA Iulia	ITTF Group CEO's Office Projects Director (sections 1, 2, 3, 4)
SCHEFFLER Wiebke	ITTF Foundation Head of Operations (sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 7)

1. Welcome from the President

The President, Ms Petra SÖRLING, started the meeting by highlighting that it is the first gathering with the newly elected members and welcoming all persons in attendance while regretting the absence of Mr Al-Mohannadi, who didn't get the USA VISA.

Ms SÖRLING reflected on the hope to work together with the new EC members to make table tennis a front-runner sport, indicating that in the meeting, there will be presentations of World Table Tennis (WTT) and the ITTF Foundation to ensure that from day one everyone is aware of the different elements of the ITTF Group.

Ms SÖRLING shared her vision to try to unify the ITTF family, to work closely with the continental federations and with all 227 MAs while reminding everyone that the athletes are the reason for being in Houston.

The EC members noted that Ms SÖRLING would work on the EC portfolios distribution, inviting them to reflect on which areas they would like to contribute.

2. Welcome from the ITTF Group CEO and Secretary General

2.1 The ITTF Group CEO, Mr Steve DAINTON, thanked the previous EC members for their work and welcomed the new members, particularly Ms Sörling, for being the first female ITTF President.

Mr Dainton stated that he missed the presence of the ITTF Deputy President, responsible for World Championships, Mr Khalil AL-MOHANNADI, in Houston.

Mr DAINTON considered the World Championships in Houston were being excellent and wanted to thank the management team, the city of Houston, the Harris County Houston Sports Authority (HCHSA) and USATT for putting the event together; the athletes for their excellent performances; and Mr LIU Guoliang, for his idea to put together a pair of CHN and USA players (in the mixed doubles event), as a fact of "Ping Pong Diplomacy", which resulted in the first medal in a World Championships for the United States in more than 50 years. Mr DAINTON also reflected in the good spread of medals.

2.2 The Secretary General, Mr Raul CALIN, also started welcoming the new EC members and reflecting on the fact that for the first time in more than one year and a half, the EC could meet physically again.

Mr CALIN added that the ITTF would need to work more closely with the government authorities to avoid situations with visas not granted, as happened for the WTTTC in Houston.

3. Introduction of each EC member

In turn, the other ten members of the EC introduced themselves (Mr Khalil AL-MOHANNADI, Mr Graham SYMONS, Mr LIU Guoliang, Dr Alaa MESHREF, Mr Alaor AZEVEDO, Mr Zoran PRIMORAC, Mr RYU Seung-Min, Mr Wahid OSHODI, Mr MAEHARA

Masahiro and Mr NATRAN Roland), reflecting in different aspects, particularly on the fact that the VISA for the ITTF Deputy President, Mr AL-MOHANNADI, was not provided and agreeing that this cannot happen once again in future World Championships.

4. Onboarding of new EC members

Mr DAINTON invited the members of the management to introduce themselves.

The EC members noted the presentation from Mr CALIN about the process to be undertaken in the coming weeks regarding their onboarding. Aspects as the necessary confidentiality of certain matters discussed in the EC meetings, fiduciary duties, conflict of interest and particularly the terms of reference were introduced to ensure the ITTF does not suffer similar problems as those experienced during the previous administration.

Mr CALIN mentioned that since September 2017, the EC meetings had been run paperless, and all documents are shared electronically to reduce the carbon footprint.

5. World Championships Update

The EC noted the report of Mr DAINTON on the preparations for the World Championships since they were awarded to Houston in 2019, particularly with the disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr DAINTON touched on the matter of VISAS, with the known cases of visas not granted, something the ITTF needs to work harder in the future to avoid it happening again, the figures of participants, the Ping Pong Diplomacy gala event organised and the COVID-19 protocols and key figures.

The EC noted the report of Mr CALIN on the first ever hybrid AGM in which, being a year of elections, the MAs received financial support either for their physical attendance or remote participation to ensure a proper Internet connection.

In summary, Mr DAINTON considered that being able to organise the World Championships in 2021 after one-year disruption, the turnover of spectators, the spread of medallists and the fact of accomplishing it during the pandemic should be considered a successful World Championships.

Mr AZEVEDO reflected on the options to have the World Championships aired in more territories and be accessible to more viewers.

Mr PRIMORAC reported on the question raised at the AC meeting held the day before concerning the case of the athlete WANG Yang from Slovakia, asking about his situation, and suggested involving the AC in the future in dealing with such issues.

Mr DAINTON reported the complexity of the case and that the athlete had travelled back to Slovakia and confirmed that the AC would be more involved in these matters in the future.

Mr MAEHARA presented a report on his observation of the World Championships. The information touched on lighting, interviews on the court, differences in sport presentation between the first and second hall, the IT issues experienced, particularly about scoring, the excessive duties being carried by the assistant umpire, the long duration of some matches and the lack of preparation of the ball kids, asking for improvements in the future.

Mr RYU suggested the athletes' behaviour should be monitored to ensure our sport keeps high values and good image, particularly for the new generations.

Mr NATRAN asked about the finances of the World Championships, and the President confirmed a full report would be provided to the EC Members.

Dr MESHREF touched on several aspects, particularly entries in doubles and COVID-19 regulations within the venue.

Mr PRIMORAC mentioned that the athletes' lounge should be monitored to meet standardised conditions.

Mr DAINTON suggested that COVID-19 was the main reason for most of the negative aspects mentioned and wanted to highlight that the area of Umpires and Referees' education is one the ITTF needs to prioritise.

6. World Table Tennis

The EC noted the presentation of Mr Matt POUND and Mr Philippe LE FLOC'H on World Table Tennis (WTT).

The evolution of the ITTF events since the first World Championships in 1926 and the way the commercial rights were handled was introduced as a preamble to reflect on the necessity to change the approach to ensure the sport of Table Tennis is not left behind other sporting properties in the competitive sport commercial world.

WTT was created as a professional platform focused on athletes and fans to ensure maximum benefit for the athletes and members while ensuring the sport becomes more popular.

The EC noted the advantage of having started with a clean commercial sheet, without inherited contracts that could jeopardise the ability of WTT to enter into new agreements, and the fact of doing it innovatively.

An explanation of the key differences, roles, and responsibilities of the ITTF and WTT was given, and the EC also noted the business model structure of WTT.

The presenters introduced the event's structure "*from day 1 to World number 1*" and the narrative around it, highlighting the importance of ensuring adequate prize money for the athletes and a World Ranking system that works complementarily with the event's structure.

The presentation also touched on the importance of high-level production, enhancing the digital experience, and on the different partnerships established, among them, with IMG, as the appointed exclusive media rights agency and gaming partner, which was the result of a rigorous process managed with the assistance of Deloitte.

The EC noted that the control of the rights remains in-house, different from the previous model.

The presenters mentioned, among others, confirming the calendar of events, building the WTT brand, securing investment, boosting the digital strategy, capitalising on core markets and doing it with sustainability (as clearly, it is a necessity) as current objectives.

The presenters thanked Mr LIU and Mr AL-MOHANNADI for their commitment and support to WTT.

Mr LIU, as Chair of the WTT Council, thanked the EC colleagues for their support and Mr POUND and Mr LE FLOC'H for their presentation, sharing his view about the future of WTT.

The EC noted the remarks of Mr LIU in the areas of:

- Commercial agreements of WTT in China vs other sporting properties
- Development of the sport worldwide
- involvement of stakeholders
- Prize Money
- World Ranking
- Olympic Games and World Championships
- Launch WTT event in 2020 in Macao

Mr DAINTON thanked Mr LIU for his significant support and vision since the start of WTT, Mr AL-MOHANNADI for his belief since the beginning of the project, Ms SÖRLING for bringing this item to the agenda in the very first meeting of the new EC and Mr POUND for his resilience during the last year and a half when WTT was used politically.

Ms SÖRLING reflected on the difficulty lived during the last year and stated that you have to be brave when bringing changes, thanking all those who contributed.

Dr MESHREF, Mr AZEVEDO, Mr NATRAN also intervened in this section, suggesting trying to find new ways of presentation of WTT to ensure the different stakeholders better understand it, involving the EVPs in the engagement with their respective continental federations and suggesting the Continental Federations can also play a role in ensuring the Member Associations better embrace WTT if they understand the overall benefits WTT can bring to the table tennis ecosystem respectively.

Mr RYU congratulated Mr POUND for his team efforts and dedication and hoped the athletes would get more engaged.

7. ITTF Foundation

The EC noted the presentation of Mr Leandro OLVECH and Ms Wiebke SCHEFFLER on the ITTF Foundation, which included a summary of its history since its creation in 2018 and its mission.

The EC received an update on the ITTF Foundation programmes (TT Dream Building, TT4All, TT4Health, TT Legacy and Ping Pong Diplomacy) and projects currently running, highlighting the fact that in 2022, up to 19 different projects will be running.

The EC noted the extended collaboration with the Global Sports Development Foundation, their commitment to the ITTF Foundation by duplicating their financial support, and other achievements of the ITTF Foundation.

Mr OLVECH concluded the presentation by thanking Mr DAINTON for his idea to create the ITTF Foundation and Mr RYU for his role as a Foundation Ambassador.

Ms SÖRLING thanked Mr OLVECH and Ms SCHEFFLER for the presentation and for keeping sustainability in mind, as WTT does, as part of the ITTF Group philosophy.

Mr RYU asked about sponsoring packages or other ways of supporting the ITTF Foundation. Mr OLVECH and Mr DAINTON confirmed that the ITTF Foundation is ready to receive support for various programmes or specific projects in different ways.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 ITTF Museum

The EC noted the report of Mr DAINTON about the intention to engage the new EC member, Mr LIU, in the discussions with the Shanghai authorities to improve the overall situation of the ITTF Museum.

8.2 World Championships Chengdu 2022

In response to Mr MAEHARA's question, Mr DAINTON informed the EC that the dates for the Chengdu 2022 World Team Table Tennis Championships are expected to be confirmed by the end of December.

8.3 Olympic and Paralympic Games Qualification System.

In response to Mr MAEHARA's question, Mr CALIN informed that with the creation of the ITTF Continental Council, a Working Group would be put in place to work in the QS.

8.4 Table Tennis Review (TTR).

Mr MAEHARA asked about the progress in this area, and Mr DAINTON reported that the plan is to restart as soon as feasible.

8.5 Working Group on the DTTB Letter.

Dr MESHREF asked regarding a letter from the Integrity Unit related to the DTTB Letter. The President confirmed it would be followed up.

To conclude, the President wanted to thank the EC members that finished their mandate on the 24th of November.

9. Next EC meeting

The EC noted the next meeting would be held online in January, on a date to be confirmed.

Petra SÖRLING
ITTF President

Date

Raul CALIN
ITTF Secretary General

Date