



**INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS FEDERATION  
ITTF TRIBUNAL**

**ITTFT 2025-02 & 2025-03**

**Khalil Al Mohannadi & Qatar Table Tennis Federation v.  
ITTF & Petra Sörling**

**DECISION**

Issued by the

**ITTF Tribunal**

Sitting in the following composition:

Hearing Panel Chair: Ms Anna **Smirnova**, Attorney-at-Law, Russian Federation

Panel Members: Mrs Morenike **Obi-Farinde**, Attorney-at-Law, Nigeria

Mr Olivier **Ducrey**, Attorney-at-Law, Switzerland

In the following matter:

**Mr Khalil Al Mohannadi**, Qatar,

and

**Qatar Table Tennis Association**,

Represented by Mr Alexander Zen-Ruffinen, Attorney-at-Law with InLaw  
Associates, Neuchâtel, Switzerland

**The Appellants**

**v.**

**International Table Tennis Association**

and

**Ms Petra Sörling**, Sweden

Represented by Mr Antonio Rigozzi and Mr Patrick Pithon, Attorneys-at-Law with  
Lévy Kaufmann-Kohler, Geneva, Switzerland

**The Respondents**

## I. THE PARTIES

1. Mr **Khalil Al Mohammadi**, Executive Senior Vice-President of the International Table Tennis Federation (hereinafter, "**ITTF**"), president of the Qatar Table Tennis Association (hereinafter, the "**First Appellant**").
2. **Qatar Table Tennis Association**, member association of the ITTF, governing the sport of table tennis in Qatar (hereinafter, "**QTTA**" or the "**Second Appellant**"; the First Appellant and the Second Appellant hereinafter jointly referred to as the "**Appellants**").
3. International Table Tennis Association, the world governing body of table tennis (hereinafter, "**ITTF**" or the "**First Respondent**").
4. Ms **Petra Sörling**, member of the Executive Board of the ITTF, national of Sweden (hereinafter, the "**Second Respondent**"; the First Respondent and the Second Respondent hereinafter jointly referred to as the "**Respondents**").
5. The Appellants and the Respondents are hereinafter jointly referred to as the "**Parties**".

## II. SUMMARY OF FACTS

6. Below is a summary of the main relevant facts and allegations based on the Parties' written and oral submissions. Additional facts and allegations may be set out, where relevant, in connection with the legal discussion that follows. Although the ITTF Tribunal Hearing Panel (hereinafter, the "**Hearing Panel**") has considered all the facts, allegations, legal arguments and evidence submitted by the Parties in the present proceedings, reference in this decision is made only to the submissions and evidence that are deemed necessary to explain the reasoning.
7. The dispute in question revolves around the Annual General Meeting (**AGM**) of the ITTF held on 27 May 2025 in Doha, Qatar (hereinafter, the "**AGM 2025**") and the election of the ITTF President, which was specified as Item 24 on the agenda for the AGM 2025 (hereinafter, the "**Agenda AGM 2025**"). For the ease of reference, the Hearing Panel below summarizes the factual background chronologically.

## Convocation of the AGM 2025

8. On 27 November 2024, the ITTF Secretary General (hereinafter, the "**ITTF SG**") issued the "Notice of Business ITTF Annual General Meeting 2025", whereby he notified *inter alia* that "*the ITTF Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2025 will be held on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025, in Doha Qatar*". The deadlines for propositions and resolutions for the ITTF AGM and ITTF Council in 2025 were set for 27 January 2025, 23:59 CEST and for nominations for the Executive Board, ITTF Council and Permanent Committees on 26 February 2025, 23:59 CEST.
9. On 27 February 2025, the ITTF SG circulated the communication where *inter alia* the following was specified:

*"This letter is related to the entries of the groups addressed above. For the avoidance of doubt: Delegates of ITTF Member Associations attending the AGM, ITTF Executive Board, ITTF Council, ITTF Honorary Presidents, ITTF Personal Honorary Members, ITTF Committee Chairs, ITTF Commissioners, Full Members of ITTF Permanent Committees, ITTF Athletes Commission Members not competing at the WTTC Finals Doha 2025, ITTF Integrity Board Members, ITTF Tribunal Chair, and ITTF Staff in attendance to the WTTC Finals.*

*Kindly note that each of the Member Associations and individuals listed above will receive individualised emails with the credentials for online registration and will have to clearly indicate in the online entry system if the participation in the AGM will be physical (with presence in Doha) or remotely (via Zoom ®).*

*The deadline for registration is 23:59 GMT on Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025. Accommodation and travel details must be entered online by the same deadline."*

10. On 27 March 2025, the ITTF SG circulated the communication which informed that:

*"The ITTF AGM 2025 will be held in Doha, Qatar, in a hybrid format, starting at 09h00 local time (Arabia Standard Time), on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025 (08h00 CEST – 06h00 UTC).*

*Please kindly remember that to participate in the AGM, physically and/or remotely, as well as in the different Summit sessions, the Member Associations must complete the online registration of the delegates on the online registration platform <https://ittf-summit/com>.*

*The deadline to register for the AGM and Summit has been extended to Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 23:59 UTC. If your Association wants to benefit from the free hospitality and flight ticket contribution for one delegate, please ensure you fill in all your Delegate's details on the platform by the deadline."*

11. On 9 May 2025, the ITTF SG circulated the communication providing for the link to the working documentation related to the AGM 2025.

### **Roll Call of the AGM 2025 and Voting**

12. The AGM 2025 started on 27 May 2025 at 09:00 am (Arabia Standard Time).
13. The AGM 2025 was broadcasted live on YouTube.
14. The Hearing Panel was provided with the video-recording of the AGM 2025.
15. In accordance with Item 6 of the Agenda AGM 2025, following the welcome words, opening address and review of 2024, the Roll Call of Associations was carried out for the confirmation of registered associations (hereinafter, the "**Roll Call**").
16. Before starting the Roll Call, the ITTF SG asked for the cooperation of the attendants of the AGM 2025, and stated as follows:

*"You know that this is a year of elections and traditionally in the ITTF the rule is two delegate per member association in the Room (...) persons that they know that they are not delegate one or delegate two, council members, committee chairs, please leave the room, because especially in the afternoon we have to be very strict with the presence in the room."*

17. At the outset of the Roll Call, the ITTF SG asked to say loudly and raise hands in order to identify the delegate of the member association in the room. The reason for this was that a voting card would be distributed and then the LUMI representatives would explain the duration of the validity of the card. The voting card would be needed for the whole process of voting.
18. The Roll Call started with Afghanistan, delegates of which were present in the room. The second called was Albania, however, its delegates although physically present at the AGM 2025 were not in the room at the time they were called. The last called member association was Zimbabwe.
19. Following that, the representative of LUMI confirmed that, in the room, there were present 185 member associations, 16 online, for a total of 201 member associations. The ITTF SG mentioned that the total number of the member associations can increase up to 208, if several more members registered could join the AGM 2025.

20. After the conclusion of the Roll Call, the ITTF President, Ms Petra Sörling proceeded to Item 7 of the Agenda AGM 2025, the appointment of the Chair of the AGM 2025 (hereinafter, the "**AGM Chair**").
21. Prior to voting on the Item 7 of the Agenda AGM 2025, the representative of LUMI explained the voting instructions. The voting was set to be carried out through the electronic device, namely the voting keypad and the voting smartcard which were distributed to the delegates present in the room. The voting card must be kept during all the time of the AGM 2025, including the breaks. The LUMI representative explained the mode of using the keypad and the voting smartcard for those present in the room.
22. The LUMI representative further specified for those member associations who are voting online:

*"The vote will automatically appear when opened. Here you will see the voting question and the voting options. Simply then click on your desired selection. You will note that a "Vote Received" message appears to confirm your vote has been cast.*

*To change your vote, simple click on another selection. You may change your vote at any time while the voting period is open. Once the vote has closed, your last selected vote will be submitted.*

*If you do not select any of the voting options within the prescribed amount of time, your vote will not be cast and therefore will be considered as not counted."*
23. The member associations were then offered the test vote question in order to check whether the voting procedure is clear. The results of the test voting were displayed showing the total possible votes of 202, and votes received – 194. The LUMI representative explained that there was an additional person online during the vote.
24. Following the test voting, Mr Abdulla Al-Mulla, the Chair of the ITTF Nominations Committee, asked the clarification about the total number of voters being 202, whereas initially 201 was mentioned. The ITTF SG explained that probably one person who was not accounted in the moment of the count, joined the AGM 2025, physically or virtually, because there were approximately 208 registered members.
25. The first vote question concerned Item 7 of the Agenda AGM 2025 and the appointment of Mr Graham Symons, ITTF Executive Vice-President as the

AGM Chair. Total possible votes on this question was 202, votes received – 194.

26. During the following questions brought for voting the total possible votes number was constantly raising from 202 to 205.

### **Election of ITTF President**

27. Item 24 of the Agenda AGM 2025 provided for the election of ITTF President. Of the original three candidates for the position of the ITTF President, only two participated in the election, namely Mr Khalil Al Mohannadi and Ms Petra Sörling.
28. The AGM Chair informed the delegates in the room that at the request of the candidates, the voting was set to be carried out through the paper ballots, not the electronic voting. Further clarification of the voting procedure was made by the ITTF SG:

*"The first thing we would like to request you please is not to move from your seats from the beginning of the voting until the end of the last delegate has going to vote. We will start a roll call where we will ask you one by one start in alphabetical order to come from your seat from your seats with your voting card. The voting card that you have had during the day, you will drop in a box that will be available there. Then our director of operations will deliver to you a paper ballot for the election for president.*

*As you have seen today, Mr El Hacen has withdrawn. This means that Mr El Hacen is not part of the election. You have to decide to vote between Mr Al Mohannadi, and Mrs Sörling. You need to cross the box next to the candidate that you prefer to be elected. And then you have to fold only once. Fold only once the paper and put in a second box, a second crystal box that will be in another table. When this process has been complete, we ask you please to kindly go back to your seat to ensure that the room stays as calm and as organized as possible.*

*So once again the process will be as follows. We will start a roll call alphabetically. We will call the first delegate going to the table that is more in your right. In this table there will be a box where you will drop the card that was used during the morning. Then our director of operations in the second table will give you a paper ballot. And in this paper ballot going to the third table against the wall, you will put your mark and go back to the third table to drop your ballot.*

*Very important. No person is allowed to walk to the three tables with any digital devices. All your telephones, all your cameras, all your digital devices must stay in your chair. You can only walk with the card that was provided by LUMI this morning. From the 10 scrutineers that*

*you have selected today, there will be two scrutineers sit one in each side of the table. So by being sit they cannot see what are you writing, but they can see that you are not making photos or taking any proof of your vote to ensure the confidentiality, the anonymity and also the peace of mind for everyone. And then once again when you are finished you fold once. You fold only once and then you drop your vote in the second crystal ballot.*

*Is the process clear for everyone?"*

29. Several questions followed then and one of such questions concerned the online voters. To one of such questions, the ITTF SG clarified:

*"The delegates online vote will start with the first association opening, Afghanistan, and will close with the last association vote, Zimbabwe."*

30. Prior to open the voting, the ITTF SG stated as follows:

*"So for the online voters, the procedures for the vote in the room is being finalized. There has been a request for paper ballots for the participants in the room. That's why the process has not been starting yet. It will start in a few minutes, hopefully soon. The vote will be open from the moment that we call Afghanistan until the moment that we call Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe has completed its vote and anyway will be announced the vote is open and the vote is closed as in all the other propositions."*

31. The ITTF SG with the help of the assistant in the room simulated the process of the voting, demonstrating to the attendees the technical details of the voting procedure.
32. Then the ITTF SG announced that the vote for the Presidential Election 2025-2029 is open (hereinafter, the "**Presidential Election**").
33. The first association called was Afghanistan (physically present in the room), and then the ITTF SG proceeded calling the delegates of the member associations in alphabetical order similarly to as it had been done during the Roll Call; for the online voters the ITTF SG made mentioned that the called member association is voting online. The last member association called for the voting was Zimbabwe.
34. After the calculation of the votes, the result was announced that Ms Petra Sörling won the Presidential Election with total 104 votes in her favour, and Mr Khalil Al Mohannadi got in total 102 votes in his favour. The total number of voters was 206 (hereinafter, the "**Appealed Decision**").

35. Following the announcement of the results AGM Chair proceeded to the next item on the Agenda AGM 2025, i.e. the election of the ITTF Executive Vice-Presidents.
36. However, at that moment several delegates of the member associations present in the room started to express their dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Presidential Election and the winning of Ms Petra Sörling.
37. Particularly, the protesters drew the attention to the unclarity about the actual number of voters and especially those voters who participated in the Presidential Election remotely via the online platform.
38. The situation escalated to the extent that the AGM 2025 was eventually interrupted and no further items on the Agenda AGM 2025 were considered.
39. The AGM Chair decided to suspend the AGM 2025 and postpone the resolutions and voting on the rest items of Agenda AGM 2025 until further notice.

### III. PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE ITTF TRIBUNAL

#### *a) Written stage of the proceedings*

40. On 17 June 2025, the First Appellant filed via email the 'Request for Commencing the Proceedings (of an Appeal)' (hereinafter, the "**First Appellant's Request**").
41. On 17 June 2025, the Second Appellant filed via email the 'Request for Commencing the Proceedings (of an Appeal)' (hereinafter, the "**Second Appellant's Request**"; together with the First Appellant's Request referred to as the "**Appeals**").
42. In their Appeals the Appellants submitted the same Prayers for Relief:

#### *On a provisional basis*

*1. To order the Nomination Committee not to destroy voting material within the meaning of Article 10.21.1 of the ITTF Constitution.*

*2. Order the ITTF to take all measures to preserve all evidence relating to the AGM of 27.05.2025, in particular as regards the ITTF Presidential election.*

#### *On the merits of the case*



*3. To annul the decision of the ITTF AGM of 27.05.2025 on agenda item 24 (Presidential Election) to recognize that Ms Petra Sörling won the Presidential Election by 104 votes to Mr Khalil Al-Mohannadi's 102 votes and, consequently:*

*3.1. To declare that Mr Khalil Al-Mohannadi has won the presidential election by 98 votes to Ms Petra Sörling's 87, and to declare that he has been elected President of the ITTF.*

*3.2. In the alternative, order the ITTF to convene a general meeting and to repeat the vote on the election of the ITTF President in accordance with the instructions of your Tribunal.*

*4. Order the ITTF to pay the costs of the case.*

*5. Order the ITTF to pay fair costs to the Appellant.*

43. On 18 June 2025, the ITTF Tribunal Chair acknowledged receipt of the Appeals, the two procedures under reference numbers 2025-02 and 2025-03 were opened.
44. The ITTF Tribunal Chair granted the Respondents a time limit until 9 July 2025 for filing the answers by email with the ITTF Tribunal.
45. On 4 July 2025, the counsel for the Respondents requested a ten-day extension of the time limit in both proceedings, namely until 21 July 2025; the ITTF Tribunal Chair granted the Respondents the requested extension , until 21 July 2025.
46. On 21 July 2025, the Respondents filed their consolidated answer in both proceedings (hereinafter, the "**Answer**").
47. The Respondents submitted the following Requests for Relief in the Answer:
  - i. The appeals filed by Mr Al-Mohannadi and the Qatar Table Tennis Association and all of their prayers for relief are dismissed.*
  - ii. The decision of the ITTF Annual General Assembly of 27 May 2025 to elect Ms Petra Sörling as the ITTF President is confirmed.*
  - iii. Mr Al-Mohannadi and the Qatar Table Tennis Association shall bear all the costs incurred with the present proceedings and pay a contribution towards the legal costs incurred by the ITTF and Ms Petra Sörling in connection with these proceedings.*
48. On 22 July 2025, the ITTF Tribunal Chair informed the Parties that pursuant to article 8.24.7 of the ITTF Tribunal Regulations, the Parties are not authorised to file any unsolicited submissions.

***b) Composition of the Hearing Panel***

49. On 23 July 2025, the ITTF Tribunal Chair informed the Parties that pursuant to article 8.25 of the ITTF Tribunal Regulations 2025, the ITTF Hearing Panel will comprise of Ms Anna Smirnova from Russia, Ms Morenike Obi-Farinde from Nigeria and Mr Jorge Ibarrola, Chair, from Switzerland.
50. On 28 July 2025, the Second Appellant filed the "*Formal Objection to the Appointment of Mr Jorge Ibarrola – Pursuant to Article 8.26 of the ITTF Tribunal Regulations*". Thereunder, the Second Appellant objected

*"to Mr Ibarrola's appointment on the grounds of a clear conflict of interest. He has previously represented the ITTF in several legal matters and received financial compensation for legal services provided to the Federation during the presidency of Ms Sörling, who is also a respondent in this matter. This prior professional relationship with both the Federation and Ms Sörling compromises the independence and impartiality required of a panel chair in the current proceedings."*

51. On 29 July 2025, having rejected any accusations of the Second Appellant regarding the alleged lack of independence and/or impartiality, the ITTF Tribunal Chair informed the Parties of his decision to withdraw from the hearing panel in order to ensure that all Parties be comfortable with its composition.
52. On 29 July 2025, the ITTF Tribunal Chair informed the Parties that the Hearing Panel would comprise of Ms Morenike Obi-Farinde from Nigeria, Mr Olivier Ducrey from Switzerland and Ms Anna Smirnova, Chair, from Russia.
53. No further challenges were made by either of the Parties in respect of the composition of the Hearing Panel.

***c) Preliminary Hearing***

54. On 11 August 2025, based on the availability provided by the Parties, the Hearing Panel issued the directions to the Parties whereunder (i) confirmed that the Oral Hearing would take place on 28 August 2025 at 10:00 CEST via video-conference, (ii) requested the Parties to provide for their position

on whether the preliminary organizational meeting would be needed for the discussion of the Oral Hearing details, and (iii) to provide for the list of attendees to the Oral Hearing and make proposal as regards the tentative schedule for the Oral Hearing.

55. Following the consultation with the Parties, on 21 August 2025, the Hearing Panel held the Preliminary Hearing whereby the Parties expressed their views as regards (i) the procedural status of Mr Abdulla Al-Mulla, his direct and cross-examination, (ii) the tentative timetable for the Oral Hearing, and (iii) the Parties were given the opportunity to submit any other procedural requests.
56. During the Preliminary Hearing the counsel for the Appellants *inter alia* confirmed their intention to have Mr Abdulla Al-Mulla be heard as witness on the side of the Appellants; on the other side, the counsel for the Respondents maintained their position stated in par. 113-116 of their Answer filed on 21 July 2025 and reiterated that in the Respondents' view the testimony of Mr Al Mulla was not needed.
57. Having considered the argumentation of the Parties the Hearing Panel decided to admit the testimony of Mr Abdulla Al-Mulla, and the Appellants were allowed to call him as their witness at the Oral Hearing.

#### ***d) Oral Hearing***

58. On 28 August 2025, the Oral Hearing was organized via a recorded zoom-conference (hereinafter, the "**Oral Hearing**"). The Oral Hearing was attended by the following persons:

##### On behalf of the Appellants:

- Mr Khalil Al Mohannadi, the First Appellant
- Dr Mohammed Abdulla Al Saleh, Secretary General of QTTA
- Mr Alexander Zen-Ruffinen, the Appellants' counsel
- Mr Abdulla Al-Mulla (witness)

##### On behalf of the Respondents:

- Ms Petra Sörling, the Second Respondent
- Mr Antonio Rigozzi, the Respondents' counsel
- Mr Patrick Pithon, the Respondents' counsel

Hearing Panel:

- Ms Morenike Obi-Farinde, Member of the Hearing Panel
  - Mr Olivier Ducrey, Member of the Hearing Panel
  - Ms Anna Smirnova, Hearing Panel Chair.
59. After examination and cross-examination of the witness, Mr Abdulla Al-Mulla, the Parties made their closing statements and a turn of rebuttal was granted to them as well.
60. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Parties confirmed that they had no objections with regard to the proceedings and respect of their procedural rights.

**IV.SUMMARY OF THE PARTIES' SUBMISSIONS**

61. In substance, the Appellants' position can be summarized as follows:
- As a principal point of their argumentation, the Appellants drew the attention of the Hearing Panel to the alleged failure of the First Respondent to carry out the presidential election in a fair, regular and correct way.
  - According to the Appellants, in violation of article 10.22.2 of the ITTF Electoral and Appointment Regulations and its decision taken at the start of the vote to authorise only physical vote, by paper ballot, the First Respondent nevertheless accounted the electronic votes of those member associations who participated in the AGM 2025 remotely.
  - According to the Appellants' position, the "electoral body" was constituted in an irregular way, in violation of the ITTF Statutes, accordingly the AGM was not properly representing the will of the member associations.
  - The Appellants *inter alia* alleged that the First Respondent in violation of the ITTF Statutes allowed to participate in the Presidential Election the member associations who failed to register themselves to the AGM 2025 in a timely manner; in particular, the Appellants pointed out that allegedly the Greenland Table Tennis Association was accepted to voting at the Presidential Election only after the voting procedure had

commenced, and the delegate of Table Tennis Jersey allegedly was not entitled to be a delegate representing this association.

- Pursuant to the argumentation of the Appellants, the voting procedure at the Presidential Election was not clear and lacked transparency particularly in terms of the electronic voting by the member associations participating in the AGM 2025 remotely.
- According to the Appellants, it was the general understanding of the attendants of the AGM 2025, that the Presidential Election would be based only on the paper voting by the member associations physically present in the room.
- The Appellants further pointed out that the recommendations of Mr Abdulla Al-Mulla, the Chair of the ITTF Nominations Committee, given in relation to the alleged infringements of the Presidential Election were not taken into account.
- The Appellants submitted that the Presidential Election at the AGM 2025 was carried out in violation of the general democratic principles, and in this respect referred to international legal standards, Swiss law and jurisprudence of the Swiss Federal Tribunal.

62. In substance, the Respondents' position can be summarized as follows:

- The Respondents' main argument was that the AGM 2025 was validly held in the hybrid format, allowing all the member associations to duly and properly participate in decision-making processes, voting and elections.
- The Respondents submitted that in the course of the AGM 2025 and, particularly, during the Presidential Election there were no violations either of the ITTF Statutes and/or of Swiss law and/or any other applicable regulations.
- The Respondents further stated that even if certain discrepancy occurred in the course of the AGM 2025 and the Presidential Election - which was firmly denied by the Respondents - none of such alleged discrepancy was significant enough to have had any impact on the outcome of the AGM 2025 and the Presidential Election.

- According to the Respondents, the convocation and registration of the member associations for the participation in the AGM 2025 was made correctly and in full compliance with the applicable provisions of the ITTF Statutes; according to the Respondents, the deadlines for registration in the AGM 2025 specified in the letters of the ITTF SG are of organizational nature, and cannot preclude a member association from attending the AGM either in person or virtually.
- According to the Respondents, the Presidential Election properly accounted the votes of all attending member associations, both of those present physically at AGM 2025 in Doha as well as of those who attended the AGM 2025 remotely.
- The Respondents' position is that the Appellants are anyway barred from making any complaints against the alleged procedural flaws at the AGM 2025 as in accordance with applicable Swiss law such objections shall be raised immediately.

## **V. JURISDICTION OF THE ITTF TRIBUNAL**

63. In accordance with article 8.15.1 of the ITTF Tribunal Regulations, and subject to articles 8.15.2 and 8.15.3 thereof, the ITTF Tribunal shall have jurisdiction to hear and decide any alleged infringement of any article under the ITTF Constitution or any other rule or regulation of the ITTF Statutes or any Related Document except:
- any provision under Chapter 5 of the ITTF Statutes (ITTF Anti-Doping Rules), and
  - any provision of the Classification Rules of ITTF Para Table Tennis.
64. In accordance with article 8.15.2 of the ITTF Tribunal Regulations, the ITTF Tribunal has the original jurisdiction to hear and decide any alleged infringement of any provision or such other claims arising from any provision under Chapters 1, 2, 6 and 7 of the ITTF Statutes and any Related Document.
65. In accordance with article 8.15.3 of the ITTF Tribunal Regulations, the ITTF Tribunal has appellate jurisdiction to hear and decide any appeal of any

decision made by the appropriate decision-making body on alleged infringements of any provision or such other claims arising from any provisions under Chapters 1, 3, 4, 9, and 10 of the ITTF Statutes and any Related Document.

66. The Respondents explicitly stated in their Answer that they do not dispute that the ITTF Tribunal has jurisdiction in the present matter.
67. Therefore, the Hearing Panel considers that the ITTF Tribunal can rule on the dispute between the Appellants and the Respondents.

## **VI. ADMISSIBILITY OF THE APPEAL**

68. Article 8.15.4 of the ITTF Tribunal Regulations reads as follows

8.15.4. Where the ITTF Tribunal exercises its appellate jurisdiction pursuant to R8.15.3:

8.15.4.1 the provision of these ITTF Tribunal Regulations will apply in appeal proceedings before the ITTF Tribunal mutatis mutandis, unless they are inconsistent with or preempted by the provisions of R8.15;

8.15.4.2 unless otherwise specified in any provision of the ITTF Handbook, the Request for Proceedings of the appeal must be filed with the ITTF Tribunal no later than 21 days after the date that the appealing party receives the decision in question. This 21-day deadline to appeal may not be extended. The decision being appealed will remain in full force and effect pending determination of the appeal, unless the Hearing Panel (or the ITTF Tribunal Chair, if the Hearing Panel has yet to be formed) orders otherwise; and

8.15.4.3 the Hearing Panel has full power to hear the matter under appeal de novo and it will have all of the powers that the actual first instance decision-maker would have had under the applicable provision in the ITTF Handbook. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Hearing Panel may remit the matter to the first instance decision-maker for re-hearing, if it deems appropriate.

69. The Appealed Decision, namely the decision of the ITTF Annual General Assembly to elect Ms Petra Sörling as the ITTF President was taken on 27 May 2025.
70. The Appellants filed their requests against the Appealed Decision on 17 June 2025, i.e. within the statutory time limit of 21 days.

71. The Respondents have explicitly stated in their Answer that they do not dispute that the Appellants' appeals have been filed within the applicable time limits are thus admissible.
72. Therefore, the Hearing Panel confirms the admissibility of the Appeals.

## **VII. APPLICABLE LAW**

73. In accordance with article 8.16 of the ITTF Statutes, the decisions shall be based on:
  - 8.16.1.1. primarily, on the ITTF Constitution, the Laws of Table Tennis, the other chapters of the ITTF Statutes, and the decisions of any competent ITTF body; and
  - 8.16.1.2. subsidiarily, on Swiss law and such other law that the Hearing Panel deems applicable. In the latter case, the Hearing Panel shall give reasons for its decision.
74. The Hearing Panel will apply the rules contained in the ITTF Statutes and, subsidiarily, Swiss law shall be applicable.

## **VIII. BURDEN and STANDARD OF PROOF**

75. Before commencing the analysis of the merits of the case, the Hearing Panel notes that pursuant to article 8.32.1 of the ITTF Statutes, unless otherwise stated therein, the claimant has the burden of proving that the respondent committed the infringement(s) alleged in the claim.
76. As to the standard of proof, in accordance with article 8.33.1 of the ITTF Statutes, unless otherwise stated therein, the standard of proof on all questions to be determined by the Hearing Panel is to the comfortable satisfaction of the Hearing Panel. This standard of proof is higher than a mere balance of probability but lower than proving beyond a reasonable doubt. In particular, CAS jurisprudence clearly established that to reach this comfortable satisfaction, the Hearing Panel should have in mind "*the seriousness of the allegation which is made*" (CAS 2014/A/3625, CAS 2005/A/908, CAS 2009/A/1902, CAS 2016/A/4558).



**IX. ON THE MERITS*****a) Introduction***

77. The Hearing Panel has thoroughly analysed the divergencies in the positions of the Appellants and the Respondents in relation to the convocation and organization of the AGM 2025, having drawn particular attention to the procedures followed in the course of the Presidential Election.
78. In furtherance of the resolution of this dispute, the Hearing Panel deems necessary to recollect the considerations concerning the AGM 2025 chronologically, from convocation to the Presidential Election, and accordingly to address the following questions:
- Was the AGM 2025 convoked, organized and carried out in compliance with the ITTF Statutes and Swiss law?
  - Could the member associations of the ITTF join the voting procedures and, in particular, the Presidential Election after the Roll Call?
  - Was the Presidential Election at the AGM 2025 carried out in conformity with the applicable laws and regulations?
  - Was there any discrepancy at the organization and arrangement of the AGM 2025 and the Presidential Election serious enough to serve as grounds for the annulment of the results?

***b) Was the AGM 2025 convoked, organized and carried out in compliance with the ITTF Statutes and Swiss law?***

79. As a starting point the Hearing Panel turned its attention to the convocation of the AGM 2025 and registration of the member associations intending to participate.
80. At par. 86 point 3 of the First Appellant's Appeal, it is submitted that ITTF had failed to convene correctly the member associations for the AGM 2025, namely, that the registration of the participants was made inappropriately:

*A deadline of 11.59pm on 27 March 2025 was set for those entitled to attend the AGM to register. This deadline was extended once, to 10 April 2025. The attention of the recipients of the letter was drawn to the importance of this deadline by highlighting it in bold red type.*

*However, it would appear that several member associations registered at the last minute to vote electronically.<sup>1</sup>*

81. The Respondents *inter alia* submitted that

*"nothing in the Statutes or in any ITTF regulation imposes a strict registration deadline as a condition for participation in AGM. The 10 April date mentioned in the Secretary General's letter of 27 February 2025 (and extended by letter of 27 March 2025) was merely an organisational deadline, intended to facilitate logistics for those attending the AGM in person."*

82. According to the Respondents, the deadline for the registration to AGM is only the "organisational deadline" which *"does not preclude a member association from attending the AGM, whether in person (without benefiting from the free travel and accommodation) or virtually"*.

83. On this account, the Hearing Panel primarily referred to the pertinent provisions of the Swiss Civil Code (SCC), applicable to the legal status and governance of the ITTF.

84. In particular, the Hearing Panel took into consideration Art. 63 par. 3 SCC, whereby it is set out that a general meeting must be convened in accordance with the rules set out in the articles of association.

85. In accordance with Art. 67 par. 1 SCC, all members of an association have equal voting rights at the general meeting.

86. Bearing this in mind, the Hearing Panel referred to the following pertinent provisions of the ITTF Constitution:

1.37.1. The AGM is the supreme governing body of the ITTF and consists of the assembled representatives of the Associations.

1.38.1. The AGM has the powers set out in the Statutes, in particular to:  
1.38.1.2. elect, suspend, or remove the President and the Executive Vice-Presidents (including the Deputy President);

1.39.1. Each Association may appoint 2 Delegates to represent it at the AGM.

1.39.2. Each Delegate shall either be a citizen of their appointing Association, as evidenced by their passport, or shall have their main residence in the Territory controlled by their appointing Association for no less than 12 months before the relevant AGM. Delegates belonging to the

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<sup>1</sup> See par. 86 point 3, First Appellant's Appeal.

same state unity, with the same kind of national passport, must have their main residence for at least 12 months before the relevant AGM in the Territory controlled by their appointing Association.

1.40.1. The Delegates may attend the AGM with the right to speak and vote.

1.48.1. Each Association present not in arrears shall have 1 vote.

87. The ITTF Constitution does not provide for any restrictions on the attendance and/or participation of the member associations in the general meetings, and does not restrict anyhow the time-limits for the registration to the general meetings. Therefore, the Hearing Panel concludes that, in accordance with Swiss Civil Code the primary objective of the ITTF shall be to ensure the proper participation in the general meetings and exercise of their voting rights for all the member associations.
88. In order to assess the meaning and legitimate purposes of the registration to the general meeting, the Hearing Panel then reverted to the communications of the ITTF SG concerning the convocation and organization of the AGM 2025.
89. On 27 February 2025, the ITTF SG informed the member associations that they will receive *"individualised emails with the credentials for online registration and will have to clearly indicate in the online entry system if the participation in the AGM will be physical (with presence in Doha) or remotely (via Zoom)."*
90. On 27 March 2025, the ITTF SG reminded the member associations that *"to participate in the AGM, physically and/or remotely, as well as in the different Summit sessions the Member Associations must complete the online registration for the delegates on the official registration platform."*
91. The Hearing Panel further noted the argument of the Appellants, that in accordance with article 1.45.1 of the ITTF Constitution, notwithstanding any deadline set out regarding the AGM, the Executive Board may vary from such deadline under urgent or exceptional circumstances.
92. The Hearing Panel inferred that the primary objective at the convocation of the general meetings is to ensure that the rights of the member associations are properly respected. The purpose of the registration of the attendees to

the general meeting is rather organizational than restrictive, and it is aimed to ensure the compliance with the ITTF Constitution as regards the entitlement to represent a member association. Thus, among other obligations of the ITTF is to determine whether the particular member association intends to attend the general meeting physically or remotely, and accordingly to verify whether the relevant delegate conforms to the statutory requirements for the representation of the member associations.

93. In this regard, the Hearing Panel agrees with the argumentation of the Respondents that the deadlines established in the communications of the ITTF SG for the registration to the AGM are of organizational nature, and not restrictive. Unlike the deadlines established in the ITTF Constitution, Part III, Division 1: General Meetings, the organizational time limits can be flexible. Therefore, the Hearing Panel does not share the opinion of the Appellants that any and all of the time limits related to the AGM can be amended only by the Executive Board. This could be considered as excessive formalism impeding the smooth functioning of the ITTF.
94. Further, the Hearing Panel considered the arguments of the Appellants regarding the allegedly incorrect composition of the "electoral body", and in particular, the participation of the Jersey and Greenland Table Tennis Associations.
95. In respect of the Jersey Table Tennis Association, the Appellants expressed their concern as regards the documentation provided by the representative of the said member association in confirmation of their compliance with the requirements set out in article 1.39 of the ITTF Constitution, namely the requirement of the residence on the relevant territory.
96. On this account, the Hearing Panel has noted that the Respondents produced on the record the exchange of the email correspondence with the representatives of the Jersey Table Tennis Association.
97. Indeed, the representative of Jersey Table Tennis Association has Greek nationality, however, in addition to the Greek passport, they provided for the 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' issued by the Head of Service for Jersey Customs and Immigration.

98. The Hearing Panel took note of the Appellants objections that the mentioned document was issued on 10 March 2021, and over four years elapsed since then. However, the Hearing Panel also took into account that it is a regular practise in many countries, especially within the European Union (even though Jersey is obviously not a member of the EU), that the permanent residence permit notwithstanding being indefinite in duration shall be technically updated every five years.
99. The Hearing Panel is comfortably satisfied that the documentation provided by the Respondents in confirmation of the rights of the delegate from the Jersey Table Tennis Association is sufficient for the regular participation of this member association in the general meeting.
100. As regards the participation of the Greenland Table Tennis Association, having considered the documentation submitted by the Respondents on the record, the Hearing Panel took into consideration that Greenland Table Tennis Association was timely registered to the AGM 2025, participated online, and this was pointed out by the ITTF SG at the Roll Call. Consequently, even if Greenland Table Tennis Association actively participated only in the Presidential Election, no breach of the ITTF Statutes occurred, as the said member association was duly provided with the opportunity to express its will at the general meeting.
101. Consequently, the Hearing Panel is comfortably satisfied that the AGM 2025 was properly convened by the First Respondent. The Hearing Panel finds that, to ensure the right of the member associations to participate in the general meeting is of utmost priority for an association established in accordance with Swiss law. Therefore, the registration of certain member associations outside the time limits established in the communication of the ITTF SG, although it may give rise to certain inconveniences, does not in general have any severe impact on the outcome of the AGM 2025.

***c) Could the member associations of the ITTF join the voting procedures and, in particular, the Presidential Election after the Roll Call?***

102. The Hearing Panel further turned its attention to the allegation of the Appellants that after the Roll Call, no member associations could be admitted to voting. The same statement was repeated by Mr Al Mulla, the Chair of the ITTF Nominations Committee, after the announcement of the results of the Presidential Election and reiterated in his witness testimony.

103. In this respect, the Hearing Panel first turned their attention to the pertinent provisions of the ITTF Constitution relating to the roll call, namely:

1.46. AGENDA

1.46.1 The agenda for an AGM shall include:

1.46.1.2 a roll call of the Associations present.

1.48.4 Voting other than in elections shall be by a show of hands, electronic or online means, roll call, or secret ballot, as decided by the AGM on a proposition by the AGM Chair.

104. With the foregoing in mind, the Hearing Panel turned attention to the Roll Call procedure carried out at the outset of the AGM 2025. Based on the video recording of the AGM 2025 provided by the Parties, the Hearing Panel observed that the following announcement of the Roll Call, which was mentioned under Item 6 of the Agenda AGM 2025, the ITTF SG called 207 registered member associations in alphabetic order and with specification whether the called member association was participating in presence or online. After the Roll Call, the representative of LUMI confirmed that 185 delegated of the member associations were present in the room and 16 more member associations were participating to the AGM 2025 online. Following that, the ITTF SG informed the attendants of the AGM 2025 that during the day the total number of the attendees may increase up to 208.

105. The Hearing Panel's interim conclusion is that the legal meaning of the Roll Call, even though it is not expressly stated so in the ITTF Constitution, is to establish whether there is a quorum required for the general meeting to proceed. In the case at hand, the quorum was in place.

106. The Hearing Panel further noted that no objections or comments were expressed by any of the attending delegate of the member associations in

the AGM 2025 against the possible increase of the total number of the participating member associations.

107. Furthermore, the Hearing Panel noted that throughout the voting process up to Item 24 of the Agenda AGM 2025, the Election of the ITTF President, the number of voters increased from 202 up to 206.
108. Having considered the underlying provisions of the ITTF Constitution and the actual procedures followed during the voting and Presidential Election of the AGM 2025, the Hearing Panel concluded that, although it might be regretful that the maximum number of the possible voters was not once again specifically mentioned right before the Presidential Election, this had been done by the ITTF SG at the earlier stage right after the Roll Call, and therefore, all the attendants of the AGM 2025 were made aware that a maximum of 208 member associations may take part in the voting and the Presidential Election.
109. Hence, the Hearing Panel does not find any issue in the fact that throughout the AGM 2025 the actual number of the member associations participating in the voting and the Presidential Election varied within the maximum limit announced by the ITTF SG after the Roll Call.

***d) Was the Presidential Election at the AGM 2025 carried out in conformity with the applicable laws and regulations?***

110. The Appellants submitted that the voting procedure at the Presidential Election of AGM 2025 was not in conformity with the ITTF Statutes, that the ITTF failed to consider recommendations of Mr Al-Mulla and the overall Presidential Election was made in breach of the basic democratic principles. According to the Appellants argumentation, although in general the hybrid format of the AGM 2025 was not contested, the Presidential Election, however, should have been organized only based on the paper ballots cast by the delegates physically present in Doha on 27 May 2025, whereas the votes of those delegates who participated remotely should not have been taken into account.
111. These submissions were fully rejected by the Respondents.

112. Having thoroughly analysed the Parties' positions, the Hearing Panel refers primarily to the applicable provisions of the ITTF Statutes, namely:

10.4 SUPERVISING BODY

10.4.1 The Nominations Committee shall be the responsible body to oversee and supervise each part of the Election Process and Appointment Process in accordance with these Regulations and the Statutes.

10.4.2 The Nominations Committee shall operate and carry out its duties, responsibilities, and obligations in accordance with these Regulations, its terms of reference, and the Statutes and shall have and exercise all powers and authority necessary to carry out its duties, responsibilities, and obligations as set out in these Regulations.

10.4.3 The Nominations Committee shall be responsible for Vetting a Candidate to be Appointed or Elected to a Key Position.

10.4.4 The Nominations Committee may issue directives, guidelines, or such other documents to govern the Election Process and the Appointment Process.

10.4.5 Subject to Article 10.26, decisions made by the Nominations Committee will be final and binding.

10.22 VOTING PROCEDURE

10.22.1 Member Association (or its representative) that is entitled to vote in the Election shall cast their vote in the manner set out in Article 1.48 of the Statutes and as follows.

10.22.2 Votes to elect Candidates to each Key Position shall be cast by secret ballot and may be done in person or electronically, in the manner prescribed or directed by the AGM Chair.

10.22.3 The voting procedure shall be overseen by scrutineers approved according to Article 1.48.5 of the Statutes.

10.25 SUSPECTED BREACH

10.25.1.2 Any suspected breach of any other Part of these Regulations must be reported within 30 days following discovery of the circumstances.

113. The Hearing Panel has noted that the Nominations Committee did not issue any specific directives, guidelines, or such other documents to govern the election process at the Presidential Election of the AGM 2025. Therefore, the Presidential Election was governed regularly in accordance with the ITTF Statutes and subsidiarily, in accordance with Swiss law.
114. Accordingly, the votes to elect the ITTF President were cast by secret ballot and were done on the paper ballots by the delegates present at the AGM 2025 in person and electronically by those delegates of the member associations who attended the AGM 2025 remotely.



115. The Hearing Panel has noted that before the announcement of the Presidential Election, the ITTF SG explained in detail the voting procedures for those delegates who were physically present at the AGM 2025 and afterwards explained the voting procedure for the online voters.
116. As follows from the videorecording of the AGM 2025, no protest was expressed by any of the delegates in relation to the participation of the online voters in the Presidential Election.
117. On this account, the Hearing Panel cannot share the Appellants' view that it was the common understanding of the attendees to the AGM 2025 that the Presidential Election would be accounted solely based on the votes of those present physically in Doha.
118. The Hearing Panel further recalled that in principle no objection or doubt was expressed by any member association in relation to the arrangement of AGM 2025 in the hybrid format. In this regard, it is worth referring to Art. 75 SCC, which regulates the right of an association's member to dispute a decision adopted by the association. To do so, the member must not have adhered to the decision. In other words, in order to be entitled to challenge a decision adopted at the association's general assembly, a member who attended the assembly must have opposed the decision or at least not adhered to it; otherwise, the member may be deprived of their standing to challenge the decision.
119. In this case, the Appellants have neither proven nor alleged that they would have refused, whether before the AGM or during it, to vote in the election of the ITTF President because the voting process was biased or illegal.
120. In other words, the Hearing Panel infers that ITTF has correctly ensured that all of its member associations have equal access to the voting in compliance with the requirements set out under the Swiss Civil Code and the ITTF Statutes.
121. Therefore, the Hearing Panel cannot agree with the interpretation proposed by the Appellants that allegedly the delegates participating in the AGM 2025 remotely should be deprived of exercising their right to vote.
122. The Hearing Panel further noted that no concern or objection was expressed by any of the scrutineers supervising the Presidential Election, nor any

eventual written complaint and/or suspicion followed by any other member association save for the QTTA.

123. Finally, the Hearing Panel turns its attention to the recommendations of Mr Abdulla Al-Mulla made after the announcement of the results of the Presidential Election. *Inter alia*, Mr Al-Mulla expressed his concern about the addition of the voters after the Roll Call, failure of the ITTF SG to announce the change in the number of voting associations, and accordingly requested the disclosure of the relevant elements by LUMI, verification of the chronology of the connections, requesting that only the votes of those physically present in the room shall be considered. Mr Al-Mulla suggested that the voting for the Presidential Election would be repeated. During the Oral Hearing Mr Al-Mulla largely repeated the same reproaches towards the organizers of the Presidential Election at the AGM 2025.
124. Although having thoroughly considered the testimony of Mr Al-Mulla as well as his statements made on the video-recording of the AGM 2025, the Hearing Panel cannot agree that any of the mentioned alleged flaws in organization of the Presidential Election should result in the annulment of the results and repetition of the voting.
125. As already deduced by the Hearing Panel above, in accordance with Swiss Civil Code and the ITTF Constitution, absolute priority at the voting procedures shall be given to ensuring that each member association was granted the possibility to exercise its voting rights. Any member association registered to the general meeting has right to decide whether it intends to participate in such general meeting in full or in part, whether it intends to express its will on all items of the agenda or only part of them. Therefore, the Hearing Panel sees no issue in the fact that the number of the voters varied during the AGM 2025 within the maximum limit, neither does it see any legal issue in the fact that the Presidential Election took into account all the votes, physical (cast in presence) and electronical (cast remotely).

***e) Was there any discrepancy at the organization and arrangement of the AGM 2025 and the Presidential Election serious enough to serve as grounds for the annulment of the results?***

126. The Hearing Panel has noted the considerations of the Appellants and allegations that the discrepancies in the convocation of the AGM 2025, formation of the "electoral body" and voting procedures were lacking the necessary transparency, predictability and legal compliance.
127. Although the Hearing Panel may admit that, at any general meeting embracing the participation of hundreds of attendees both in person and remotely, there always is room for improvement. Having assessed the overall arrangements of the AGM 2025 and its outcome, the Hearing Panel remains of the opinion that none of the points referred to by the Appellants could constitute the grounds for the annulment of the Presidential Election.

## **X. COSTS**

128. Pursuant to R8.36 of the ITTF Statutes:

### **8.36 Costs**

8.36.1 The Hearing Panel may, at its sole discretion, order any party to the proceedings to pay some or all of the costs of the proceedings, including any one or more of the following:

8.36.1.1 the costs of holding the hearing; and

8.36.1.2 the legal fees, the accommodation costs, travel costs or such other expenses incurred as a result of the proceedings for

8.36.1.2.1 the Hearing Panel members, as approved by the ITTF Executive Board;

8.36.1.2.2 any party to the proceedings;

8.36.1.2.3 any witness; and

8.36.1.2.4 any independent expert.

8.36.2 Without limiting the Hearing Panel's discretion as stated in R8.36.1, the Hearing Panel may award costs against a party for advancing any claim that is frivolous, vexatious, or entirely without merit.

129. In the present circumstances, the Hearing Panel considers that the costs of the proceedings be borne by the Appellants in the following proportion: 50% by the First Appellant, and 50% by the Second Appellant.
130. Each Party shall bear his/its legal costs incurred in connection with this procedure.
131. The final amount of the costs of the proceedings will be communicated to the Parties per separate communication from the ITTF administration.

## XI. ON THESE GROUNDS

### The International Table Tennis Tribunal rules that:

1. The Appeal filed by the First Appellant, Mr Khalil Al Mohannadi, is dismissed.
2. The Appeal filed by the Second Appellant, Qatar Table Tennis Association, is dismissed.
3. The Decision of the ITTF Annual General Meeting as of 27 May 2025 to elect Ms Petra Sörling as the ITTF President is confirmed.
4. Any further claims of the Parties are rejected.
5. The costs of the proceedings shall be borne by the Appellants in the following proportion: 50% by the First Appellant, and 50% by the Second Appellant.
6. Each Party shall bear its own legal and other costs.

Lausanne, on 23 September 2025 (operative part served on 1 September 2025)

  
Anna Smirnova  
Hearing Panel Chair

  
Morenike Obi-Farinde

  
Olivier Ducrey