



Dear Friends,

In the light of the extreme events in the sports world that unites you and me, related to the military actions of Russia in Ukraine and namely the decision of the International Olympic Committee headed by Mr. Thomas Bach on the possibility of admitting Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate in international competitions, the National Federation of Mountaineering of Ukraine (UMCF) and personally I ask you to consider the information that may be important for understanding of the full situation in Ukraine.

On February 2nd, 2023, an online conversation took place between the leadership of the FAiS of Ukraine in my person and the Vice-President Serik Kazbekov with the President of the IFSC, Mr. Marko Skolaris, where the UMCF expressed its position with all the arguments that we discussed. We heard and saw from Mr. Marko full understanding. He also mentioned that they received a request from the National Olympic Committee of Ukraine (hereinafter - NOC) on this matter and at the meeting scheduled for February 16th, 2023, IFSC wanted to hear the opinion of the national federations on this question. After this call we decided to prepare a letter of appeal to all the presidents of national federations. In this letter we want to outline the situation and provide additional arguments, in particular:

For 11 months, the IOC had been supporting Ukraine and Ukrainian athletes. Russian athletes were being suspended from international competitions as the motto of the Olympic movement is “world peace, friendship and solidarity”. We were hoping that the IOC Executive Board would explain what changed at the beginning of 2023? Has the war ended? Do Ukrainian athletes really have to turn a blind eye to the fact that:

- thousands of civilians die in Ukraine;
- relatives, friends and defenders of the Motherland die;
- some cities are wiped off the face of the earth;
- a lot of people were left without houses, apartments and any property;
- 231 athletes have died so far, 28 captured, 4 missing, 18 of them are alpinists and climbers, among them the vice-president of FAiSU Alexander Zakolodny. He protected his daughters, the wife and the country from bombings, atrocities and violence;
- 87 sports bases were destroyed and 320 were partially destroyed, athletes in some regions have nowhere to train and live;
- some of the terrible atrocities of the Russian army are known all over the world - murders, torture, violence.

I, my family, athletes, coaches, members of the Federation and all our people live in the situation where no one ever knows where the shells fired from the territory of Russia will arrive. People live in constant fear and do not feel safe. People live with electricity and heat cut off.

Does the IOC executive committee consider war to be the norm?
So many dead, so much destruction, so much grief!

Unfortunately, many Russian athletes, having returned from the Olympics'22, supported Putin. There are video materials where Olympians transfer money to the Russian armed forces. Isn't that support of the war?

Moreover,

- According to the rules of doping control, Russian athletes were supposed to be under doping control in 2022, this did not happen;
- By what criteria will they determine who supports the war and who does not?
- Even when tough laws were not adopted to discredit the Russian army, the Russian Climbing Federation did not protest against the war.

Also on February 3rd, 2023, an extraordinary meeting of the NOC of Ukraine was held, where it was decided that if athletes from Russia and Belarus are admitted, Ukraine and allied countries will boycott their participation in the Olympics, and Ukrainian athletes will not take part in international competitions together with Russian and Belarusian athletes.

UMCF and our state are well aware of the consequences of such a decision by the NOC for Ukrainian athletes and the fate of Ukrainian sports in the future, therefore, our state and UMCF are doing their best to prevent the situation where Ukraine will be forced to refuse to participate in the Olympic Games, for which we, the national federations, need to join forces to prevent Russian and Belarusian athletes from the aggressor countries from participating in absolutely all official international climbing competitions without an exception.

You are well aware of historical data, still let me recall it for a complete analysis and forecasting of the development of the situation in Ukraine for the whole world in the near future:

- February 7th-23rd, 2014, Sochi hosted the Winter Olympics...
In the last days of the Olympiad, on February 20th, 2014, Russian troops landed in Crimea without identification marks, and it was the beginning of the armed seizure of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

- Six years earlier, on August 8th, 2008, on the first day of the Summer Olympics in Beijing, Russian President Putin attacked Georgia from air, sea and land. Russia had started to interfere in the internal affairs of Georgia 16 years earlier, in 1992. All those 16 years, Georgia had been looking for ways to de-escalate and avoid the aggravation of the conflict with Russia. However, already in early 2008, when Georgia's possible entry into NATO was being discussed, many began to predict Russian invasion (despite an active mediation by the UN and European countries). As a result of that war, in Georgia, 5-6% of the country's population became refugees.

As we can see, Putin and Russia regularly violate the Olympic Truce and even make it a kind of tradition. In both Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, Russia covered its invasion with the actions of some separatists who hadn't not existed before or who suddenly had military skills and heavy weapons.

In the same way, Russia throughout its history has been using sports as a cover and to create a positive image in the world. However, if you look closely, it becomes clear that everything Russia is aimed at has the only goal: the war and the seizure of territories.

Let's take a look at the leading Russian climbers who have repeatedly won or found themselves on the podium of the most prestigious competitions:

All athletes serve in CSKA and are supported by the Russian army.

Victoria Meshkova - CSKA, participant of the Olympiad;
Alexey Rubtsov - CSKA, participant of the Olympiad;
Yulia Kaplina - CSKA, participant of the Olympiad;
Ekaterina Kipriyanova - CSKA;
Dmitry Fakiryarov - CSKA;
Alexander Shikov - CSKA;
Sergei Luzhetsky - CSKA;
Elena Krasovskaya - CSKA;
Nikolai Yarilovets - CSKA;
Vadim Timonov - CSKA, the winner of the Military World Games (2017);
Anna Tsyganova – CSKA.

All of them are not just talented athletes - they all represent the sports club of the Russian army (CSKA).

Even the coaches and the leadership of the federation:

Dmitry Sharafutdinov - CSKA coach,
Dmitry Bychkov - the President of the Russian Climbing Federation, the head coach of CSKA sports team.

Sport, like many other things in Russia, is very closely connected with war and politics.

Therefore, if you and I give them the opportunity to speak out (no matter what flag they wave), we will thus tell the whole world that Russia is not doing anything wrong and the world is ready to live with this truth further without trying to stop the destruction of an entire nation, of all the countries.

Ukraine is not ready to live like this, so we - our country, the Federation, the athletes - continue to fight.

Do you know what we both are looking for and fear the most at the same time? This is the liberation of our cities from Russian occupation. We are afraid of finding out new atrocities and crimes of Russian soldiers. Finding out new Bucha(s), Mariupol(s), Izyum(s), Kherson(s)...

We believe that the world will not allow evil to go unpunished, therefore we appeal to you with a request to help UMCF and Ukraine in this fight and support our right to freedom and life.

Sincerely

President of the Ukrainian Mountaineering
and Climbing Federation



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