



Polski Związek Alpinizmu

POLISH MOUNTAINEERING
ASSOCIATION

MARCO SCOLARIS

PRESIDENT

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION

OF SPORT CLIMBING

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INTERNATIONAL
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OF SPORT CLIMBING

INTERNATIONAL
SKI MOUNTAINEERING
FEDERATION

Warszawa, 13.02.2023

Dear Mr. President, Dear Marco,

I am concerned about the news that is coming to us from the IOC and also from the IFSC with the regard to the recently resumed discussion on whether to allow athletes from Russia and Belarus to participate in international competition. Like their sports organizations, they were excluded from international competition due to Russia's shameful, unworthy, and unjust invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The assault continues, more cities and important centers are destroyed, people die, and infrastructure, including sports, has been utterly destroyed. Russian bombs and rockets permanently damaged 80% of the sports halls and facilities where Ukrainian climbers trained and prepared for competitions. A significant number of athletes were forced to leave their homes and went on forced emigration, e.g. to Poland. Some players fight to defend the borders of their country, and some of them never come back from this fight. This is the reality in Ukraine. Competitors from Russia and Belarus can, in comfortable conditions and with full concentration, carry out a training cycle aimed at preparing, among others, for the Olympic Games. This disparity has nothing to do with the principle of equal opportunities. This is indecent and immoral.

We cannot imagine that, in this situation, competitors from Russia and Belarus could compete on equal terms in international competitions, and even more so in the Olympic Games. After all, their foundations are peace, brotherhood, and friendship. Only a man devoid of imagination and empathy can allow athletes from two countries at war, which is the result of aggression, to stand next to each other at the start line. Polish athletes stand in 100% solidarity with our friends from Ukraine.

There is an ongoing debate in sports and political circles. Different opinions are expressed and different proposals are made. The argument is the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of a passport. So what is a passport? It is proof of belonging to a country and nation. Also, a country that is waging a shameful war. The overwhelming majority of the Russian people support and stand by their leader for the war in Ukraine. So an athlete with such a passport symbolizes this country whether he wants it or not. So what if he does not hear the anthem of his country, and the Russian flag does not hang on the Olympic mast? It does not matter. The Olympic laurel will be given to a Russian, not a citizen without a homeland. It is obvious that such a solution has already been applied when it turned out that Russian sports are suffering from doping, supported by the Russian authorities. Then, for the sake of those who wanted to compete fairly, this formula was created. In our opinion, the use of this mechanism to enable athletes from Russia to compete in the current situation is unjustified. Doping is a serious disease that destroys sports, while Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a deadly disease threatening the whole world. Our response to these actions must be coherent and united. The only fair way for RU and BY to return to the family of Olympic sports is the end of hostilities and the withdrawal of Russia from the occupied territory of independent Ukraine.

Consideration should also be given, especially in the leadership of international sports federations such as the IFSC, to what the international sports community's response might be. Who will want to compete with the Russians and who will not? The result is likely to be a rift in a large family of athletes. There will also be moral dilemmas - whether to comply, be indecent and start, and maybe even win, or boycott the competition and deprive yourself of what may be your only chance for a medal. So on one scale there is the boycott and split in our community and on the other the removal of two countries from the start. You have to answer this question and many others.

We, Poles, stand by the Ukrainian athletes. I think many other nations do too. Please consider this.

Kind regards

Piotr Pustelnik

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pustelnik', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Polish Mountaineering Association