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Re: Decision to award the European Games 2019 to Minsk

Through the IOC Agenda 2020 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has made some advances with regard to recognising its responsibility for transparency, accountability, and human and labour rights, in particular anti-discrimination, in relation to the Olympic Games, including a broad commitment to “ensuring the respect of the host for our values and for the athletes who are at the heart of the Olympic games,” as President Bach articulated in the keynote speech to the 127th IOC session in Monaco.

However, the Sports and Rights Alliance remains concerned that the plans laid out in the agenda do not go nearly far enough towards ensuring fundamental human rights protections in relation to the staging and hosting of Games in the Olympic movement.

We feel there is a need and an opportunity to go further. This includes the entire Olympic movement and, in particular, the European Olympic Committees (EOC). The EOCs have not yet taken a clear stand on human and child rights, media freedom, labor standards, and anti-corruption. We call on the EOC to do so, without delay.

Policies and practices adopted by the EOC have the potential to prevent, mitigate, and respond appropriately to the full spectrum of human rights and good governance risks posed before, during, and after the European Games. The governance and responsibilities of international sport are receiving unprecedented global attention, and the international demand for urgent action will persist.

Ahead of the European Games 2015 in Baku, we raised serious human rights concerns regarding Azerbaijan and asked the EOC to call on the Azerbaijani government to take action.¹ Unfortunately, no measures were taken before and during the Games to ensure fundamental human rights protections. For example,

¹ SRA letter sent to Mr. Patrick Hickey on March 26, 2015 regarding “Human rights concerns related to the 2015 Baku Games”.

the Azerbaijan government seriously restricted freedom of the media and freedom of expression, including by jailing critics and preventing several journalists from reporting on the Games and other issues in Azerbaijan. These actions directly contravene the Olympic values, the requirements of the Olympic Charter, and the IOC Agenda 2020.

By granting the European Games 2019 to Minsk, the EOC has chosen to award the games to a government that severely restricts independent media and critical civil society. The government has shown a clear lack of tolerance for criticism around major international sporting events. Authorities arbitrarily detained activists to prevent them from participating in public events before the May 2014 International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship.

The EOC has an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure that the human rights violations associated with the Baku Games and during Belarus's hosting of the International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship are not repeated.

Acting as one voice, the undersigned organizations have developed a set of key recommendations on labour and other human rights and anti-corruption, which you will find in the attached document. These recommendations set forth the minimum steps the EOC and the Belarussian government should take to ensure that the European Games respect and promote universal human rights, protect the rights of workers, guarantee full media freedom, and contribute to transparency and good governance.

This letter and the attached recommendations are supported by a broad coalition of organizations which recognizes the Olympic movement's stated commitment to human rights. These recommendations are complementary to a similar set of requirements, with a broader set of measures, which we have called on the IOC to implement. We are in regular and substantive dialogue with the IOC regarding the meaningful implementation of these measures.

We look forward to your response and remain available to meet with you and your relevant staff in the near future to discuss the EOC's role in the concrete implementation of these requirements.

Yours sincerely,

Sport and Rights Alliance partners:

Amnesty International

Football Supporters Europe

Human Rights Watch

International Trade Union Confederation



RAISING THE BAR FOR
SPORT, HUMAN RIGHTS
AND TRANSPARENCY

Terre des Hommes
Transparency International Germany
UNI Global Union (and its affiliate EU Athletes)