



To: **Her Excellency Kirsty Coventry OLY**  
International Olympic Committee  
Maison Olympique  
1007 Lausanne  
Switzerland

Sent electronically by e-mail

Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025

The National Olympic Committees of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania express their deep concern regarding the recent IOC recommendation on the participation of youth athletes holding Russian and Belarusian passports in international competitions.

We reaffirm our full commitment to the Olympic Movement and its mission to inspire young people through sport. At the same time, we firmly believe that the credibility of Olympism depends on the consistent defence of peace, human dignity, and respect for international law. Political neutrality must never become a substitute for moral responsibility.

### **Fundamental Concerns**

We strongly oppose any measure that would permit athletes representing Russia or Belarus to participate under national flags, anthems, colours, uniforms, or as team entries while the ongoing aggression against Ukraine continues.

Our position is based on the following considerations:

#### **1. Risk of Instrumentalization and Propaganda**

Russia and Belarus have repeatedly demonstrated their use of international sport as a tool of state narrative and legitimisation. The presence of national symbols or team participation – particularly in youth events – creates a direct platform for state representation, contradicting the Olympic values of peace and mutual respect.

#### **2. Integrity, Fairness, and Impact on Principle-Driven Athletes and NOCs**

Many national federations and NOCs have taken principled decisions not to compete against representatives of aggressor states. Any framework that penalises, excludes, or disadvantages them would undermine trust in global sports governance and weaken Olympic unity. At the same time, athletes from countries actively supporting Ukraine bear a real financial, social, and institutional consequences of this solidarity. Any perception that aggression is being normalised through sport risks deep demoralisation among athletes who are asked to uphold Olympic values while paying a tangible price for doing so.

#### **3. The Illusion of Neutrality in Team and Symbolic Representation**

A flag, anthem, team entry, or coordinated delegation is an explicit expression of state identity. These elements cannot be separated from ongoing violations of peace and sovereignty. Reintroducing them while aggression continues represents a contradiction of Olympism.

#### **4. Youth Competitions and the Entourage Dimension**

Youth athletes are accompanied by coaches, officials, and other entourage members.

Ensuring full, credible verification of non-affiliation with state, military, or propaganda structures across entire delegations presents serious practical challenges. The risk of insufficient vetting must be openly acknowledged.

### **Our Position and Requests**

In line with previous IOC Executive Board decisions, Olympic Summit conclusions, and the collective stance of the European Olympic community, we respectfully urge the IOC, International Federations, and event organisers to:

- **Maintain and strictly enforce** existing restrictions prohibiting Russian and Belarusian representation under national flags, colours, anthems, or team formats at all international competitions, including youth events, until the aggression against Ukraine has ceased and accountability for violations of international law is ensured.
- **Guarantee protection** for NOCs, federations, and athletes who refuse to compete against aggressor representations, ensuring they are not penalised, sanctioned, or otherwise disadvantaged.
- **Preserve truly neutral individual pathways** only for the athletes who have passed verifiable integrity and anti-doping checks, have no affiliation with military, state, or propaganda structures, fully respect the Olympic Charter, and whose participation involves no national symbols, team formats, or state-linked entourage. While we do not agree to current regulations regarding Individual Neutral Athletes' (AINs) participation in the International sports events, including Olympic Games, believing that such an opportunity is inconsiderate while active warfare is ongoing in Ukraine, we do understand the viewpoints that has led to the regulation as it stands on AINs holding Russian or Belarusian passport and once again stress the necessity for utmost diligence in its application.

### **Commitment to Peace and the Future**

We recognise that sport and culture are often among the first bridges rebuilt after conflict. Once a genuine ceasefire is achieved and peace restored, international sport should play a leading role in reconciliation.

Until that moment, rights must be accompanied by responsibility. Sport must remain a path toward hope—it must never become a vehicle for obscuring war.

Our thoughts and solidarity remain firmly with the athletes and people of Ukraine.

Sincerely,



Kersti Kaljulaid  
President  
Estonian Olympic Committee



Raimonds Lazdins  
President  
Latvian Olympic Committee



Daina Gudžinevičiūtė  
President  
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