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PC.DEL/650/24  
30 May 2024

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1476th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 May 2024

**On continued discrimination in sport and violation of relevant OSCE commitments**

Madam Chairperson,

In the distant year of 1912, the French nobleman Pierre de Coubertin penned his famous “Ode to Sport”, a work that heralded the worldwide revival of the Olympic Movement. It contains, in particular, these lines: “O Sport, you are Peace! You forge happy bonds between the peoples by drawing them together in reverence for strength which is controlled, organised and self-disciplined. Through you the young of all the world learn to respect one another, and thus the diversity of national traits becomes a source of generous and peaceful emulation.”<sup>1</sup>

The Baron de Coubertin was, of course, an idealist. For no one has ever succeeded in completely freeing sport and especially the Olympic Movement from politics. One need only think back to the 1936 Olympic Games in Nazi Germany, the tragedy of the 1972 Munich Olympics, the mutual boycotts at the 1980 and 1984 Moscow and Los Angeles Olympics, the endless scandals at matches for the title of World Chess Champion during the Cold War, and much more besides. However, in his wildest nightmares the Baron de Coubertin could never have imagined what is happening in the world of sport nowadays.

Let us talk about the situation in the sporting community in general, and in the Olympic and Paralympic Movement in particular. We are obliged to note that, in violation of relevant OSCE commitments at the State level, discrimination in sport – and, what is more, discrimination of the very worst kind – is flourishing in Western alliance countries that are participating States of our Organization. We specifically have in mind the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. In particular, it is mentioned there that “in order to expand existing links and co-operation in the field of sport, the participating States will encourage contacts and exchanges of this kind, including sports meetings and competitions of all sorts, on the basis of the established international rules, regulations and practice.”

Similar provisions are to be found in the 1989 CSCE Vienna Concluding Document, whereby the participating States “will facilitate such contacts and co-operation among their peoples through such measures as direct sports exchanges on a local and regional level”.

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<sup>1</sup> English translation taken from *Journal of Olympic History*, Vol. 14 (May 2006). p. 14

The fast approaching Summer Olympic Games in Paris attest to an intensified politicization of various areas of international sport. The event's host, France, is openly discriminating against volunteers from Russia. Dozens of them have been denied relevant accreditation under patently spurious pretexts. In a number of cases this concerns people who have taken part in such activities on many occasions. Moreover, since the beginning of May this year the organizers have been simply ignoring a collective appeal from those who were turned down. We would be curious to learn how such overt discrimination based on national origin tallies with the recent assurances by Alexandre Morenon-Condé, a director on the team of the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee, that "the volunteer programme is open to everyone without exception."

France is by no means the only country in the Western camp at whose instigation bias is constantly and increasingly making itself felt in the realm of international sports co-operation. A not insignificant role in this regard is being played by the United States of America, which is consistently seeking to have Russian athletes, coaches and referees excluded from participation in national and international competitions. More detailed information, not least on this matter, may be found in a recent report by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the human rights situation in the United States, which has been published on the Ministry's website. We urge everyone to study it carefully.

The authorities in Washington and their allies are actively implementing a policy of segregation through international sports federations. In this respect, the leadership of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been doing their bidding for many years. The issue of doping is used to blackmail and smear those deemed "undesirable". On the same level as this is the barring of the Russian Olympic team and its official representatives from the Summer Games in Paris, along with the ban on any symbols associated with our country. Only individual "neutral" athletes and their technical assistants may be given the chance to participate. However, further decisions concerning them were taken in March of this year. They boil down to forcing athletes to repudiate any association with their homeland, nationality, history, culture and people. By the way, the question of their actually participating in the Olympics has yet to be settled.

In addition, we are seeing a once respectable and prestigious sports organization, namely the IOC, turn into a political police agency right before our eyes. Thanks to some recent "revelations" by IOC President Thomas Bach, it has emerged that representatives of the Committee requested the Ukrainians to monitor statements made by Russian athletes on the Internet and in the media. They were set the task of finding "compromising material", including opinions and comments that could serve as grounds for barring Russian citizens from the Olympic Games.

This raises the question as to how such actions can be squared with the requirement, enshrined in the Olympic Charter, that political neutrality be observed. We would remind you that, in accordance with Chapter 1, section 2, of that document, the Committee's role is "to take action to strengthen the unity of the Olympic Movement, to protect its independence, to maintain and promote its political neutrality and to preserve the autonomy of sport", and also "to oppose any political ... abuse of sport and athletes".

The actions of the IOC leadership are resulting in the curtailment of Russian citizens' right to freedom of expression. Fundamental Principle of Olympism 4 reads: "The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have access to the practice of sport, without discrimination of any kind in respect of internationally recognised human rights within the remit of the Olympic Movement. ..."

Moreover, in Rule 40 of the Olympic Charter it is stipulated that "all competitors, team officials or other team personnel in the Olympic Games shall enjoy freedom of expression in keeping with the Olympic values and the Fundamental Principles of Olympism, and in accordance with the Guidelines determined by the IOC Executive Board."

In practice, though, we are witnessing overt segregation based on national origin. Anne Hidalgo, the mayor of the French capital and host city of the Olympics, does not even try to hide it. She pronounced herself very clearly on that score in Kyiv on 28 March of this year, when she said that Russian and Belarusian athletes were “not welcome in Paris”. In that regard we cannot but note that the IOC functionaries have arbitrarily expanded their role when it comes to defining and interpreting the right to freedom of expression in relation to participation in the Olympic Games. This is an incursion into international human rights law and is enabling the collective West to make use of international bodies to “cancel” countries that it deems to be “undesirable”.

Madam Chairperson,

International sports officials have repeatedly turned a blind eye to armed conflicts, clashes and humanitarian disasters that occurred in the run-up to and during previous Olympic Games. Where was their principled stance when the NATO countries bombed Yugoslavia in 1999? Or when the United States and its allies conducted military operations in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021, in Iraq between 2003 and 2011 and in Syria from 2014 onwards? These interventions coincided with several Olympics, yet there were no statements of condemnation to be heard from the IOC. Was this matter actually even on the agenda in Lausanne? Were athletes from the countries concerned excluded from taking part? Most certainly not – their teams were able to turn up in full strength and compete under their national flags. The IOC is also displaying political “flexibility” with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip. The results of such unseemly conduct are most lamentable: the principles of the Olympic Charter undermined, the Committee discredited in the eyes of world public opinion, division sowed in the realm of world sports.

The sad upshot of all that has been said is that the forthcoming Olympics are anything you care to name – an exhibition to showcase the achievements of pharmaceutical companies, a contest between advertising and public relations agencies, an opportunity for political grandstanding, a parade of tolerance – just not a sporting event. Far removed from the ideas of the Baron de Coubertin, that is how they will go down in the annals of the global Olympic Movement.

Madam Chairperson,

Russia has consistently advocated the development of international sports co-operation based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and called for everyone without exception to be given equal access to sporting events. We call for honest and fair competitions. In our view, racism and any other form of discrimination are unacceptable in a field of activity the essence of which consists in strengthening cohesion, reaffirming universal values and overcoming racial and political barriers. Such discrimination also runs counter to OSCE human dimension commitments.

Sport must be beyond politics. That is a golden rule.

Thank you for your attention.