

Dear Andrea

Thank you for letter of 23 December 2024.

There will clearly be a number of things in the next IOC President's inbox and I am confident this will be one of them. To help understand my position on the questions you raise I have prepared a short paper on what we do at World Athletics. All the initiatives in the paper have been introduced under my Presidency which I hope will give you confidence about my commitment to many of the areas you raise. Having an open dialogue will be important for any new President of the IOC and it is important to me. I believe we are collaborators not competitors in the area of sport human rights and transparency.

I hope the attached is useful for your report and I look forward to reading it when it is completed.

Kind regards

Lord Sebastian Coe
World Athletics President

Introduction

World Athletics operates globally through international athletics competitions and development programmes with Member Federations.

Through our activities we impact different groups of people, and these impacts can be negative and positive.

This short paper sets out the commitments made by World Athletics to protect and promote human rights in everything we do.

How Human Rights span across our strategy

As an International Sports Federation, our role spans across three pillars:

- **As a regulator** for elite sport, we establish rules and regulations for competitions, run bidding processes and deliver events.
 - **Stakeholders impacted** include athletes participating in international competitions when we make decisions around eligibility to participate in such competitions, coaches and athletes' managers who we regulate and certify, and Host Cities and their local communities, when we award events to Candidate Cities.
- **As a development body**, we aim to grow athletics everywhere in the world, especially for the younger generations.

- **Stakeholders impacted** include federation officials, young children who benefit from our global kids' athletics programme, grassroots athletics through our grant initiatives and support projects, and other Bodies and entities we partner with around joint commitments (for example our Clean Air project with the UN and Kids' Athletics Programme with UNESCO).
- **As a representative body**, we work with athletes, administrators and our sponsors and partners (including broadcast partners) to give opportunities to people to have a role in our sport.
 - **Stakeholders impacted** include anyone who wants to have a role in the sport, as an official, referee, or with our commercial sponsors and partners.

Generating a positive impact by using the power of athletics

For the last decade, World Athletics has been clear about the link between sport and health, including mental health.

Since 2015, we have been committed to driving positive impact by leveraging the power and accessibility of our sport – below are the top areas where we think we have made a difference:

A focus on children

The UNICEF Convention for the rights of the Child, recognizes that children have the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities (art 31).

According to WHO data, 80% of teenagers do not exercise enough and this has long term health implications on their wellbeing.

So World Athletics has focused on programmes that bring kids and teenagers in athletics– in 2023 for example, 500,000 children worldwide participated in our kids athletics programme.

This programme is rolled globally but special attention is given to areas where athletics can make a difference, even for a day. As an example, in September 2024, we organized a Kids' Athletics event in Khan Yunis, Palestine, for 193 children and we work with kids in refugee camps in Kenya supported by UNHCR.

Similarly we have rolled out a nation-wide programme in Ukraine for kids and teenagers to participate in athletics which has been specially developed since March 2022.

A focus on women

The other positive impact on Human Rights is our focus on gender equality – essentially transforming a male dominated power structure into one of equal representation.

World Athletics is the first International Sport Federations to achieve full parity on its Council – this was written into our Constitution and the 2023 Council elections in Budapest delivered a 50/50 Council, four years before our target date.

As background, in 2015 there was not one woman President of a national athletics federation in the entire world.

In 2023 we have 27 women Presidents, and we have helped this first cohort of pioneers by creating opportunities for women administrators to be elected or appointed to decision making roles through constitutional changes in all our Area Associations.

Of course, 27 women Presidents out of 214 Federations is just the beginning of the journey. Sports elections operate on a quadrennial cycle, so change does take time, from creating the conditions for women administrators to rise through the ranks, until they get elected to the top roles in their Federations.

World Athletics' Gender Leadership taskforce drives initiatives, training, role modelling and male advocacy right across the sport.

Freedom of expression and athletics as a safe space

The third area where we have taken a clear and unwavering stance is to highlight the importance of freedom of expression for our athletes and participants.

World Athletics does not impose a ban on athletes expressing political views during our events.

In fact, as long it is done respectfully and in consideration with local laws, World Athletics embraces the demands from athletes to have a right to express themselves publicly about issues that really matter to them.

We see this as an important value of who we are as a sport and how we can contribute to the global dialogue around using the power and reach of sport to contribute to improved Human Rights for participants and our fans.

Major investment in Safeguarding

Everyone participating in athletics has the right to enjoy our sport in a safe environment. Our Safeguarding Policy mandates all Federations to implement a safeguarding programme. We have dedicated safeguarding officers at all our Events and we deliver courses and training across the ecosystem to raise awareness and equip the coaches, officials, parents and referees with tools to identify and report safeguarding concerns whenever they arise.

Standing up for what is right

On occasion, the circumstances we are dealt with do not allow us to stay neutral and we have made decisions which we believe are the right ones on moral, ethical and fairness grounds. When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, our Council decided that the sport could not stay neutral.

As a result, we made significant investments in supporting by any means possible the Athletics Federation of Ukraine, with a focus on elite athletes – this included re-housing arrangements for the athletes and their families outside Ukraine, funding training camps, equipment delivery to replace the sports equipment destroyed by Russia.

At the same time, World Athletics suspended the participation of Russian and Belarussian athletes in international competitions for as long as Council deems necessary.

A Working Group was set up in 2023 to monitor the situation and periodically report to council any relevant information.

Human Rights governance and policy

The **Governance** of Human Rights is formally assigned to the Risk Committee which reports directly to the World Athletics' Executive Board.

As a regulatory body we published our [Human rights policy](#) in January 2024.

This followed the work commissioned to a Human Rights Working Group in 2020-2021.

The policy, which was approved by our Council, confirms World Athletics' commitments to:

- 1) respecting all internationally proclaimed Human Rights;
- 2) use the power of sport to engage and drive change for a better world;
- 3) promote equity, in particular equity of opportunity between the sexes, dignity, and fairness in sport competitions and sport governance;

This policy applies to all our major decisions. Below are four examples of how we implement it at World Athletics.

Our Human Rights risk assessment methodology adheres to the principle of dual materiality, whereby we consider not only the impact of our decisions on us as an organisation, but equally the impact it may have on our stakeholders.

Eligibility decisions

Our regulations define who is eligible to compete in international elite competitions.

To define eligibility standards, we have a clear process to identify and engage in a dialogue with stakeholders potentially impacted by a regulatory change; we seek to understand their vulnerabilities, and propose mitigations that will address the risk.

The feedback is then used to inform our final regulations, including any remedies to impacted groups.

Awarding events

Another power we exercise as a regulatory body is to run the process for major sports events.

During the bidding phase, we assess Human Rights impacts as part of our overall risk assessment.

We conduct independent risk assessments of all Bidders, and this work includes a specific scope covering human rights risks.

We then host, with every bidder, a series of risk workshops, and when there are Human Rights concerns, these are discussed openly and mitigations will be agreed with the Candidate Cities. These discussions cover a broad range of concerns, from labour standards for workers and volunteers, to ensure no nation or groups are discriminated against at our events.

During planning and delivery, we focus on making the event safe for participants, in particular athletes and volunteers. We roll out a safeguarding package, that includes training, a dedicated safeguarding officer and response protocols for all events.

Due Diligence

We conduct due diligence on our major third-party relationships and the scope of work covers human rights to identify potential areas of concerns. The Risk Committee will then recommend appropriate mitigations to our Board prior to confirming any partnership or decision.

Conclusion

World Athletics' core mission is to bring athletics to every corner of the world.

We have prioritised specific areas where we believe we can make a positive impact – while at the same time ensuring that whatever negative impact is clearly identified, assessed and wherever possible mitigated against. We are committed to making our events safe spaces for all participants and local stakeholders.