



Dr. Thomas Bach
President
International Olympic Committee
Av Général-Guisan 70
1009 Pully
Switzerland

October 2, 2018

Dear President Bach,

It has come to our attention that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) may adopt the now titled “The Athletes’ Rights and Responsibilities Declaration (Athletes’ Declaration)” this week at the 133rd IOC Session in Buenos Aires. While we support the intent of the initiative, we have several concerns regarding the pending adoption of the final document.

The failure to follow a best practice framework for developing and articulating the rights and responsibilities of athletes on this scale would undermine the very nature of the initiative’s intent. Based on the level of stakeholder engagement and lack of transparency in process to date, as well as the lack of a framework for the development of this document, we, as athletes and athlete representatives from across the world, are unable to support the Athletes’ Declaration should the IOC move forward.

In its current (public)¹ state, the Athletes’ Declaration falls short of expressing the full spectrum of human rights of athletes in sport, but also, and more importantly, as people. We believe the current Athletes’ Declaration is limiting and, to a large extent, unclear on definitions of rights and access to remedies should any of these rights be violated. Further, we are unclear as to how this document will be enforced and how it interacts with other onerous athlete obligations as participants in sport. We are not convinced that the athlete voice has been adequately sought out through the Athlete 365 feedback mechanism or otherwise, let alone fully integrated. Nor do we trust that the representatives forming the IOC AC, or a small group of international Olympians and Paralympians appointed to a steering committee, alone, represent a complete buy-in from the broader athlete community on such an important issue.

To build the legitimacy of this Athletes’ Declaration, we, the athletes, want to see a thorough review process by human and labour rights experts over and above the steering committee and various IOC staff currently developing the document. This is not a process that can be rushed to adoption in less than a year. The IOC must make it a priority to execute due diligence in the name of protecting the very people who are the heartbeat of sport - the athletes.

We therefore urge the IOC to postpone the adoption of this document until there is a comprehensive human rights policy within the organization that is entrenched in existing and recognized human rights standards; particularly, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), which, amongst other things, promote the fundamental process of benchmarking and risk assessment – a step that seems to be lacking in the development of the Athletes’ Declaration thus far.

¹ We have been refused access to the most up-to-date draft.



We, the athletes, who have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice for a sport system we believe in, ask you now to take the necessary time to build a declaration that will protect us, that we can trust in, and that we can support.

We, the athletes, urge you to listen; the integrity of sport depends on it.

Sincerely,

AthletesCAN

British Athletes Commission

DOSB Athletes' Commission

Track & Field Athletes Association

United States Olympic Committee Athletes' Advisory Council

- cc. Kirsty Coventry, Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission
Sarah Walker, Chair of the Steering Committee for the Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities Declaration; IOC Athletes' Commission member
Beckie Scott, Chair World Anti-Doping Agency Athlete Committee
Chiel Warners
Marcus Hausen, IOC
Kaveh Mehrabi, IOC