

Delegation from the Olympic Committee of Slovenia Position Paper for the International Olympic Committee

The topics on the agenda of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) are: Harnessing sport diplomacy for the advancement of democracy and human rights, and the Inclusion of transgender, intersex and non-binary athletes in competitive sport. The Olympic Committee of Slovenia (OKS) recognizes the great importance of these issues and looks forward to cooperating multilaterally to address them at the upcoming conference.

I. Harnessing sport diplomacy for the advancement of democracy and human rights

From the symbolic power of the Black Power salute in 1968 to the diplomatic breakthroughs of the “ping-pong diplomacy” in the 1970s to the unified Korean team at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, sport has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to influence global politics. Today, as authoritarian regimes engage in “sportswashing” to improve their public image and distract from human rights abuses and political oppression, the role of sport in defending democracy and human rights is more important than ever. While respecting the principle of politically neutral Olympic Games, the OKS believes that sport can foster dialogue and solidarity across political divides. It is therefore crucial for the IOC to harness this potential to promote human dignity and Olympic values.

The aspiration to use sport as a tool for strengthening peace and democracy is anchored in the principles of the Olympic Charter, the IOC Code of Ethics, and most explicitly, the IOC Human Rights Strategic Framework (2022), as well as in the IOC’s focus on human rights outlined in the Olympic Agenda 2020+5. This commitment is further reflected in the increasingly intensified cooperation between the IOC and the United Nations (UN) since 2009, recently reaffirmed by the General Assembly resolution of 19 November 2025 “Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal.” At the same time, the IOC continues to reinforce the role of sport as a key enabler of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), advancing health, education, gender equality, peace and strong institutions. Slovenia, a country strongly committed to multilateralism and constructive cooperation, fully supports this partnership and recognizes sport as a powerful instrument for promoting human rights and democratic values. Due to the country’s size, Slovenia does not focus its sports diplomacy on hosting major international sporting events. Instead, the OKS and the Ministry of Sport prioritize targeted, innovative strategies and research initiatives that allow Slovenia to contribute meaningfully to the global sports community. For example, Slovenia has invested advanced research on injury prevention using artificial intelligence, the results of which could benefit athletes worldwide. As a member of the European Union (EU), Slovenia actively participates in EU-programs such as Erasmus+ Sport, promoting cross-border cooperation and networking in amateur sports. The country further demonstrated its influence during its Presidency of the European Council, which led to the adoption of the European Model of Sport on 30 November 2021, reinforcing values such as human rights, solidarity and inclusive access throughout EU sports policy. Slovenia has also taken part in international cooperation structures, particularly within the framework of the Sports Coordination Mechanism between China and the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECE), established in 2021, thereby underlining its active role in international sports diplomacy. At the national level, Slovenia has emphasized the European and international dimension of sport and identified concrete measures in its “Resolution on the National Programme of Sport of the Republic of Slovenia 2026–2035”. These include, inter alia, cooperation with other governmental and non-governmental international organizations, support for cross-border sports associations, and the promotion of sustainable development policies. In line with this commitment, in January 2023, Slovenia transferred the Department of Sport from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Economy, thereby providing additional resources and enabling greater investment in sports diplomacy.

The OKS firmly believes that, given the grand importance of promoting peace, human rights, and democratic values, it is crucial to recognize the role of sports diplomacy and strengthen it as a strategic tool at both the national and international levels. Slovenia reminds the international community that even smaller nations can make a significant contribution through research and active engagement in global sports institutions. The OKS therefore calls on all IOC members to develop and implement effective sports diplomacy policies, provide adequate resources, and work closely with the IOC and the UN to advance peace, democracy, and human dignity through sport.

II. The inclusion of transgender, intersex and non-binary athletes in competitive sport

The debate over the participation of transgender, intersex, and non-binary athletes in competitions has intensified in recent years. While some sports associations, such as the World Boxing Council, completely exclude transgender athletes from competitions, and others in athletics, swimming or cycling implement strict eligibility policies, the complexity and urgency of the issue have become increasingly clear. This debate touches on issues of human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination, while also raising legitimate questions about fairness and safety in competition. The OKS considers this topic to be of great importance not only for the protection of individual athletes, but also for ensuring long-term inclusivity in competitive sports.

The OKS reaffirms the universal principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in global human rights framework, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 2 of the ICCPR prohibits all forms of discrimination, and although gender identity is not explicitly mentioned, the broad scope of protection clearly extends to individuals regardless of their gender identity. Likewise, the Olympic Charter, as the fundamental framework of the IOC, prohibits any form of discrimination in its fundamental principles of Olympism and establishes inclusion and human dignity as core values of the Olympic Movement. Therefore, the OKS believes that these principles must guide all decisions in sport. In international competitive sports, it is within the IOC's remit to set the framework for the inclusion of transgender, intersex, and non-binary athletes. In November 2021, the IOC adopted the Framework on Fairness, Inclusion, and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Gender Variations, which gives individual sporting bodies the authority to set their own eligibility policies. As a result, approaches differ significantly across sports. While some federations prohibit the participation of transgender athletes, others restrict transgender women who underwent male puberty. The IOC is currently developing a new policy framework, expected in summer 2026, with early discussions indicating that transgender women could be excluded from female Olympic events. The OKS emphasizes that these evolving guidelines must uphold a balance between fair competition and the principle of non-discrimination based on gender. This commitment to equality is also reflected at the national level, where Slovenia has taken concrete steps to promote an inclusive and non-discriminatory sporting environment for all athletes, including transgender and non-binary individuals. The organization "Out in Slovenija" plays a central role in advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) rights in sports. As the country's leading LGBTQIA sports body, it combats discrimination and promotes inclusive policies, working with authorities to ensure that transgender and non-binary athletes can participate safely and fairly. At the European level, Slovenia collaborates with the European Gay and Lesbian Sports Federation (EGLSF) and supports initiatives such as "Tackling Sexism, Trans- and Homophobia in European Grassroot Sports" (SGS), which aim to improve the inclusion of transgender athletes in sporting events and sport networks.

The OKS emphasizes that the inclusion of transgender, intersex and non-binary athletes in competitive sport is a compelling issue that intersects with human rights, fairness, and the Olympic spirit, and that concrete solutions are therefore of great importance. Slovenia's National Olympic Committee strongly affirms that promoting safe, inclusive, and fair participation is essential for the credibility of competitions at all levels. The OKS therefore calls on all IOC members and sports organizations to adopt transparent and evidence-based guidelines to ensure both: fair competition and the inclusion of all athletes.