



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS  
СОЮЗ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ АВСТРАЛІЇ

Representing 22 Peak Ukrainian Organisations in Australia  
Member of Ukrainian World Congress

24 March 2023

Mr Ian Chesterman AM  
President  
Australian Olympic Committee

Via email to [ian.chesterman@olympics.com.au](mailto:ian.chesterman@olympics.com.au)

Dear Mr Chesterman

We write to advise that we recently sent a letter to AOC Chief Executive Officer Mr Matt Carroll AM seeking an urgent meeting to discuss the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes at the 2024 Olympic Games. We urge the AOC not to support continued exploration by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) of pathways for athletes from these countries to compete under a 'neutral' flag at international sporting events.

As you would be aware via our letters to Minister for Sport the Hon Anika Wells MP — and cc-ed to the AOC on 9 and 22 February 2023 — the deep-seated links between Russian athletes and the military mean it is impossible to ensure Russian athletes compete as 'neutral' athletes. At the 2022 Beijing Olympic Games, 88% of the medals won by Russia were won by sportspeople associated with the Russian army and state security agencies. At the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, 45 of Russia's 71 medals were won by athletes who were members of the Central Sports Club of the Russian Army.

The negative impact of Russia's invasion on Ukrainian sports and sportspeople has been profound. At least 220 Ukrainian athletes and coaches have died due to Russia's war on Ukraine including former Olympic youth figure skater Dmytro Sharpar and 11-year old gymnastics star, Kateryna Diachenko, who was killed when her house in Mariupol was bombed. Over 340 sports facilities valued at \$250 million have been damaged or partially destroyed since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. Ukrainian sportspeople have said many times it is extremely difficult for them to live, train and compete whilst Russia continues to wage war on their homeland.

Given numerous sporting dreams have been devastated by Russian attacks, we think it is unacceptable that Russians or Belarusians may end up winning medals which would otherwise have been won by Ukrainian athletes. The death and disability wrought by Russia's attacks on our sportspeople mean that Ukraine is likely to field larger delegations to future Paralympic meets, rather than to future Olympics.

By exploring pathways to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to attend the 2024 Olympic Games, the IOC and AOC stand to provide a platform for Russia to legitimise its actions in Ukraine and use the success of its sportspeople to project a certain image to the world. This is exactly what Nazi Germany did.

Russia's actions on the world stage are incompatible with the Olympic ideals. During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Russia occupied part of Moldova. During the 2014 Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi, it captured the Ukrainian Crimea and part of Donbas. At the close of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, on February 24,



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with the active support of Belarus, it violated the Olympic truce and launched the brutal full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

We agree with the view of your predecessor John Coates AC who, upon his retirement last April, supported the IOC/AOC position, noting that Russia has 'lost their right to membership of the international Olympic community.' He claimed that this position would remain 'until such time as there is cause to change.' We put it to you that the last 12 months have only seen a worsening of the death, destruction and displacement caused by Russia, so there is simply no rationale for a change to welcome Russian and Belorussian athletes back into international competition.

In February, more than 30 countries — including Australia, the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Canada and New Zealand — signed a joint statement pledging support for the IOC's current ban, which was announced shortly after Russia's brutal and genocidal war invasion commenced. We were heartened to see the Canadian Olympic Committee recently announce that, in line with Canadian government policy, they will not support the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in international competition while the invasion is ongoing. We urge the AOC to take a similar principled stand in solidarity with the Australian Government and with the sportspeople of Ukraine.

We look forward to meeting with Mr Carroll in advance of the IOC meeting next week.

Victor Kovalenko OAM, the world-renowned head coach of the Australian Olympic Sailing Team, who was born in Ukraine and has intimate knowledge about the training and funding of sport in Russia and Belarus, is also available to discuss these matters with you.

Yours sincerely,

Kateryna Argyrou  
Co-Chair AFUO

Stefan Romaniw OAM  
Co-Chair AFUO

Cc HE Vasyl Myroshnychenko, Ambassador of Ukraine to Australia  
Hon Anika Wells MP, Minister for Sport  
Victor Kovalenko OAM