

## The IPC's update on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) – 07/07/2020

*The purpose of this biweekly update is to keep everyone within the Paralympic Movement informed of the latest developments with the COVID-19 pandemic and how it relates to the Paralympic Games and Para sport.*

This week's update contains the following information:

- The three things vital for the future of sport - harnessing change, developing a strong purpose, embracing diversity and inclusion by Andrew Parsons, IPC President
- Latest media statements from the IPC include - IPC Board discusses impact of COVID-19 pandemic
- IPC and Tokyo 2020 updates - all 22 sports now have updated qualification regulations
- World Health Organisation update

Our lead article this week is a thought-provoking piece from IPC President Andrew Parsons. It is a revised version of a keynote speech Parsons delivered at the Major Events Virtual Summit this week.

Parsons has observed trends emerging since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic which will change sport, major events and society. They are also trends that the Paralympic Movement can play a central part in. He contends that the current winds of change need to be harnessed to build a more inclusive society.

Parsons was of the view that globally people are identifying with sport that has a purpose, and that with inclusion and diversity high on the agenda, we must show more than ever, how societies can positively evolve when they embrace the transformational power of the Paralympic Games and Para sport.

The update this week also includes details of the IPC Governing Board meeting, which for the first time in our history took place virtually and includes several specific COVID-19 matters.

The IPC website continues to be a hub for helpful and positive stories from around the Paralympic community. We would encourage you to read [this article](#) of some of the progressive activity that has recently been taking place among National Paralympic Committees (NPC) in Asia. Activities range from online development programmes in India to presidential support in Kazakhstan, a mass testing programme in the United Arab

Emirates that has included Para athletes to NPC Iran setting up a comprehensive health observation programme for their athletes.

We want this mail to continually highlight initiatives that NPCs, IFs and athletes are doing. If you would like to let us know about your story or raise awareness of any other initiative, then please get in contact at [ipc.media@paralympic.org](mailto:ipc.media@paralympic.org).

**The three things vital for the future of sport - harnessing change, developing a strong purpose, embracing diversity and inclusion, by Andrew Parsons, IPC President**

On 31 December 2019 I retweeted a message from Tokyo 2020 which said, "This is OUR year". That date is of note for another reason: a pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan was first reported to the World Health Organisation Country Office in China.

When you look at everything that has happened over the last seven months - COVID-19, a first postponement of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, a financial crisis, and mass global protests - it would be easy to believe this is not anyone's year.

As I have said before, the Paralympic Movement is no stranger to finding creative solutions to the challenges of life. What has become clear to me in my discussions with all of you in recent months is that the future of sport events is changing. Importantly, I also believe that the IPC and Paralympic Movement is well placed for what could come next.

It may only be July 2020, but several trends are emerging that could shape the decade to come and have a major impact on sport, top events and society. I want to focus on three of these emerging trends, starting with Change.

Never has the whole world experienced such rapid and major change in such a short timeframe as it has this year.

Almost overnight, COVID-19 changed the way we lead our lives and go about our daily business. It's too early to predict what the long-term consequences of the pandemic will be on sport, but there can be no doubt that sport and sport events must adapt to this new and ever-changing situation.

However, it's not just COVID-19 that makes change such a hot topic. According to Google trends, more than three times as many people are searching 'Change' today than they were 15 years ago.

Whether it is Greta Thunberg trying to mobilise change to halt the climate crisis or the worldwide Black Lives Matters protests following George Floyd's murder, there is massive momentum right now to change the world for the better. Post-pandemic we must build back better and work together to create a society that is more inclusive, more environmentally conscious, more sustainable and more caring of each other. We can only achieve this through change.

Thanks to digital media, it has never been easier to start a movement and rally the public behind a cause.

That's why I think this decade's second trend will be the need for everything to have a strong purpose.

Towards the end of the last decade, we saw a switch towards purpose driven marketing. It's only natural that the next step is for this to transfer across to sport events too.

In the same way that it is no longer acceptable for a brand just to sponsor a sport event by sticking its logo everywhere, I think consumers will soon want sport events that are more than just great sport. They must have a purpose too.

The relationship between sport and society is changing faster than ever and consumers are increasingly aligning with brands that have a cause. Just look at the research. According to a Kantar Consulting study: *"brands with a high sense of purpose have seen their brand valuation increase by 175 per cent over the past 12 years versus a median growth rate of 86 per cent and a growth rate of 70 per cent for brands with a low sense of purpose. Looking to the future, almost two-thirds of millennials and centennials express a preference for 'brands that have a point of view and stand for something.'"*

If sports are having to rethink their offering for brands to ensure they have a purpose, then sport events need to do the same or face being left behind. Today's generation don't just want great sport, they want sustainability and accountability as well.

I believe the final trend will be diversity and inclusion.

You only need to look at the news from previous years of the #MeToo movement or more recently global protests calling for much-needed racial equality to realise that this world has never been more engaged in diversity and inclusion as it is now.

Today's society will no longer stand for exclusion; inclusion must be the future. Therefore, the sport industry must follow suit, ensuring sport events are by all for all.

It's important to note that inclusion and diversity is not just about ethnicity, gender or sexuality, it's also about disability too and ensuring the world's one billion persons with disabilities are not left behind and forgotten.

With these trends in mind, I believe the IPC is well placed because of the alignment with our vision to make for an inclusive world through Para sport.

At the IPC we want to use our global position and influence, together with our sport events and athletes, to challenge the stigma attached to disability. We want to empower social transformation and make for an inclusive society for all. Ultimately, we want to change the world through sport.

The Paralympic Games and other Para sport events are transformational. They initiate change, come with a strong and meaningful purpose and drive social inclusion like no other events.

The Games showcase the outstanding capabilities of persons with disabilities. They have stimulated the creation of truly inclusive societies that have accessible environments, promote safe and fair participation, and inspire physical activity by all.

If don't believe me, then here are some examples of how we have initiated change.

Ahead of the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games, China had a poor reputation when it came to persons with a disability. But the Paralympics changed that. From winning the Games in 2001, China introduced new laws and spent EUR 124 million on making 14,000 facilities accessible for the Games, including roads, transport hubs and public buildings.

Like China, Sochi's election as host city for the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games led to Russian authorities and society - for the first time - paying attention to the issue of inclusion and creating accessible environments

for all. New legislation was passed, and the Sochi 2014 Organising Committee created a barrier-free infrastructure, ensuring everything built for the Games was accessible for all. Sochi is now a blueprint for 200 Russian cities looking to further their own accessibility.

In Tokyo, by the time of the Paralympics almost 100 per cent of all transport hubs will be accessible, ensuring mobility for all.

The Paralympics have not just improved accessibility, they have led societal change too.

The London 2012 Paralympic Games led to one in three people - equivalent to 20 million people - changing their attitudes towards disability. In my home country of Brazil, 79 per cent of citizens said the Rio 2016 Paralympics improved their perceptions of persons with disabilities.

It is pointless changing attitudes, if nothing comes of it, and I am pleased to say the success of the Paralympic Games has created greater opportunities for persons with disabilities.

In 2018, six years after the London 2012, statistics highlighted that one million more persons with disabilities in Great Britain are now in employment, compared to before the Games.

In Brazil, following the Rio 2016 Paralympics there was 49 per cent increase in the employment of persons with disabilities compared to 2009 when the city won the right to stage the Games.

The Paralympics really are evidence that Change Starts with Sport, as none of these changes would have happened had it not being for a sport event.

The future may well be uncertain due to COVID-19, but what is certain is that for the sport industry to survive and thrive, it must change, it must have purpose and it must be socially inclusive for all.

So this may not be our year, but I believe this will be our decade.

### **Latest IPC media statements**

#### **IPC Board discusses impact of COVID-19 pandemic (issued 8 July)**

During four days of meetings that were held virtually and concluded on Wednesday (8 July), the IPC Governing Board discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the Paralympic Movement, including the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Key items discussed were: the Board endorsing the positioning, principles for re-planning, and a roadmap to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games; the Classification Department presenting a range of strategic proposals based on scenarios relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and likely sport calendar; and the impact of the pandemic on the IPC business.

The full story can be read [here](#).

### **Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes (drafted 18 March, reviewed 30 April)**

At the IPC the health and well-being of Para athletes is our top priority and we are working hard to gather as much information as possible on the potential impact of COVID-19 to provide appropriate advice.

Concern has been raised that Para athletes may be at more risk of severe disease from COVID-19, in the same way as has been stated for elderly people and for people with certain underlying health conditions.

However, the Paralympic athlete population is not a homogeneous group. Para athletes are all individuals with very different underlying conditions and health needs, so the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to COVID-19 is not appropriate or representative of an individual athlete's risk.

Nevertheless, because of the severity of the impairment or any associated immune deficit or chronic condition, some athletes could be more vulnerable. There are no current studies on the potential impacts of coronavirus on Para athletes. The honest answer is that we don't know because this is a new strain of coronavirus and there are very little data available.

Consultation with the IPC Medical Committee and International Federation medical experts, as well as information provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), indicates that there has been no evidence that an athlete with disability in general have a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Para athletes are also more experienced than is the general population to following hand hygiene, coughing etiquette and general infection avoidance procedures as part of illness prevention education - this has been a principle of Para athlete education for some time. However, at this time we all should be even more vigilant in this regard.

The IPC will continue to seek advice from the WHO, but ultimately athletes are the best judge of their own body and their medical needs.

Our advice for Para athletes is that they should follow the current medical guidance from the WHO and their national guidelines on prevention and seek advice from medical professionals. We would urge any athlete displaying the symptoms to report to their local medical authorities without delay.

## IPC & Tokyo 2020 updates

### Tokyo 2020 Qualification

The qualification regulations for judo have been updated, which means all 22 of the sports now have the most up-to-date version of the Tokyo 2020 qualification regulations. These can be found here: <https://www.paralympic.org/tokyo-2020/qualification-criteria>

### Japanese sport welcomes back spectators

There continue to be encouraging signs from Japan about the return to sport. From Friday (10 July), the two main baseball and football (soccer) leagues will begin allowing up to 5,000 fans into stadiums, as per government guidelines on large gatherings.

A medical taskforce will monitor the infection status for the following 10-14 days. They will then assess whether clubs can, from 1 August, operate their venues at half of their full capacity.

### Para sport event postponements and cancellations

The list of cancelled Para sport events remains on the IPC website and is being regularly updated. You can find details [here](#).

### Outbreak Prevention Taskforce online risk assessment and mitigation tool

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, there is a new online risk assessment and mitigation tool for endurance event organisers. The tool is intended to help organisers assess the risk of staging an event, establish the preparedness of the community and the event organisation for the risks of COVID-19, and clarify any necessary steps to further mitigate and reduce the risk. The tool can be accessed [here](#).

## World Health Organisation update

According to WHO's latest Daily Situation Dashboard on 9 July 2020 10:34 CEST, the number of confirmed worldwide cases has risen to over

11.8 million. The Americas now account for over half of the worldwide cases to date, and the USA a quarter of the cases. John Hopkins University of Medicine is reporting that nearly 6.6 million people have recovered.

WHO is concerned that the outbreak is accelerating: the last week has seen the three largest days of reported cases since the virus began, with 4 July seeing a high of 211,428 cases.

They do note that some countries have made significant progress in reducing the number of deaths. This progress has been made because countries have implemented targeted actions toward the most vulnerable groups, for example those people living in long-term care facilities.

As COVID-19 is novel virus, new information on the disease emerges and is analysed. On Tuesday, WHO acknowledged 'evidence emerging' of the airborne spread of the novel coronavirus, after a group of scientists urged the global body to update its guidance on how the respiratory disease passes between people.

The WHO has previously said the virus that causes the COVID-19 respiratory disease spreads primarily through small droplets expelled from the nose and mouth of an infected person that quickly sink to the ground. However, in an open letter published on Monday in the Clinical Infectious Diseases journal, 239 scientists in 32 countries outlined evidence that they say shows floating virus particles can infect people who breathe them in.

In response WHO said: "The possibility of airborne transmission in public settings - especially in very specific conditions, crowded, closed, poorly ventilated settings that have been described, cannot be ruled out. However, the evidence needs to be gathered and interpreted, and we continue to support this."

The IPC continues to use the WHO and their [site](#) as its main source of information regarding the COVID-19. It provides regular situation reports and have a wide range of guidance on health and protection, travel advice, as well as extensive myth-busting and technical guidance sections.

Their '[Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19](#)' guidance can be accessed on this link.



### WHO's WhatsApp messaging service

WHO's WhatsApp messaging service is providing the latest news and information on coronavirus in seven languages: Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

#### Arabic

Send "مرحبا" to +41 22 501 70 23 on WhatsApp

[wa.me/41225017023?text=مرحبا](https://wa.me/41225017023?text=مرحبا)

#### English

Send "hi" to +41 79 893 18 92 on WhatsApp

[wa.me/41798931892?text=hi](https://wa.me/41798931892?text=hi)

#### French

Send "salut" to +41 22 501 72 98 on WhatsApp

[wa.me/41225017298?text=salut](https://wa.me/41225017298?text=salut)

#### Hindi

Send "नमस्ते" to +41 22 501 73 41 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017341?text=नमस्ते>

#### Italian

Send "ciao" to +41 22 501 78 34 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017834?text=ciao>

#### Spanish

Send "hola" to +41 22 501 76 90 on WhatsApp

[wa.me/41225017690?text=hola](https://wa.me/41225017690?text=hola)

#### Portuguese

Send "oi" to +41 22 501 77 35 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017735?text=oi>

### Important website links

- [World Health Organisation](https://www.who.int/)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/)

