



**MINUTES OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
HELD ONLINE  
9 September 2025**

**INTERNATIONAL CANOE FEDERATION (ICF)**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**Overview**

This was the third meeting of the ICF Board of Directors in 2025, held online on 9 September. A quorum was formed in line with the ICF Statutes, with 29 Board members.

**Agenda**

1. Introduction and Welcome
2. President Activities
3. Secretary General Activities
4. Finance
5. Development
6. Sport
7. Paddle Worldwide Launch – Naming conventions
8. 2026 ICF Congress, Schedule
9. Event Allocation
10. Closing Remarks



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**Participants:**

Thomas Konietzko	TK	President	GER
Richard Pettit	RP	Secretary General	GBR
Cecilia Farias	CF	Vice President	ARG
Lluís Rabaneda i Caselles	LRC	Vice President	ESP
Jean Zoungrana	JZ	European Canoe Association President	FRA
Chainarong Charoenruk	CC	Asian Canoe Confederation President	THA
Toshi Furuya	TF	Canoe Sprint Committee Chair	JPN
Bridgitte Hartley	BH	Athlete Committee Chair	RSA
John Edwards	JE	Paracanoe Committee Chair	CAN
Budiman Setiawan	BS	Continental Representative - ASI	INA
Ruud Heijsselaar	RH	Canoe Marathon Committee Chair	NED
Greg Smale	GS	Canoe Polo Committee Chair	GBR
Terry Best	TBE	Canoe Freestyle Committee Chair	GBR
Noémi Horváth	NH	SUP Committee Chair	HUN
Shao Yaping	SY	Continental Representative - ASI	CHN
Jane Gibson	JG	Medical and Anti-Doping Committee Chair	GBR
Li Xin	LX	Treasurer	CHN
Marian Sârbu	MS	Canoe Ocean Racing Committee Chair	BEL
Richard Fox	RF	Canoe Slalom Committee Chair	AUS
Olubunmi Ola Oluode	OO	Continental Representative - AFR	NGR
Dr. Luk Wai-Hung	LWH	Dragon Boat Commission Chair	HKG
Sebastian Gomez	SG	Pan American Canoe Federation President	URG
Victor G. Ruiz	VR	Continental Representative - PAM	PUR
Moirá Aston	MA	Continental Representative - EUR	IRL
Peter Karai	PK	Continental Representative - EUR	HUN
Andrej Jelenc	AJ	Continental Representative - EUR	SLO
Martha Hernandez Sanches	MHS	Continental Representative - PAM	MEX
Manuela Gawehn	MG	Wildwater Canoeing Committee Chair	GER
Ahmed Mahamoud Abdoukader	AMA	Continental Representative - AFR	DJI

**Excused:**

João Manuel Da Costa Alegre Afonso	JDC	Confederation of African Canoeing President	STP
Maree Burnett	MB	Oceania Canoe Association President	NZL
Luciano Buonfiglio	LB	Vice President	ITA
Danielle Woodward	DW	Continental Representative - OCE	AUS



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**1. Introduction and Welcome**

- TK opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and informed the absence of Joao Manual Da Costa Alegre Afonso, Danielle Woodward, Maree Burnett and Luciano Buonfiglio who had sent their apologies.

**2. President Activities**

TK presented his report focusing on ICF's current updates and upcoming decisions.

**World Games**

- World Games was considered a major success, with Dragon Boat highlighted as a key discipline, receiving strong coverage on CCTV5, China's main sports channel.

**Digital Engagement**

- TK outlined the continued success of the ICF digital platforms noting that the membership of the YouTube channel continues to grow
- Plus the amount of recorded footage increased significantly this year under the new partnership with Two Circles.

**Continental Relations**

- Productive discussions took place with Continental Presidents on how they can benefit from the progress made within the ICF.

**Milan Meeting**

- ExCo meeting was held in Milan as part of the ongoing organisational review.
- Meeting in Milan gathered nearly 100 coaches and team leaders to review the Olympic qualification system.

**IOC Leadership**

- IOC is undergoing noticeable shift in leadership style under the new President, Kirsty Coventry.
- Emphasised mutual exchange and open discussions with international federations (IFs).
- Meeting with the new IOC President and IFs is scheduled for 30 November, where IOC President has invited the IFs to a workshop.

**Vice President CF and LRC presented updates.**

- CF emphasised the importance of coordinating working hours for new development staff to accommodate time zone differences, especially for the Americas, to balance paid staff and volunteer members.
- LRC reported on Erasmus+ projects: one project approved (involving 3 national federations, 2 clubs, 1 university, €400,000 grant), another to be resubmitted, and plans to submit 5-10 more projects in 2026.
- Announced hiring a dedicated person in Lausanne to manage Erasmus+ and other income-generating projects, aiming to expand funding sources beyond Europe.

### **3. Secretary General Activities**

RP presented his report.

- Congratulated BH on her appointment to the IWGA Athletes Committee for 2025-2029.
- The ICF's work continues to be structured around six core areas: TV broadcast and marketing (led by Stuart Roach), communications (led by Geoff Berkely), development (led by Cyril Nivel), operations, sport (led by Balint Vekassy), and administration (led by Renata Jakab).
- Looking ahead, ten key priorities have been identified for the period September 2025 to March 2026:
  1. Completion of the organisational review.
  2. Launch of the Paddle Worldwide rebrand and new identity.
  3. Full establishment of the Budapest headquarters, including Hungarian administrative and reporting systems.
  4. Rollout of a global project management framework.
  5. Development of the OTT platform and digital ecosystem.
  6. Expansion of partnerships and licensing programmes.
  7. Delivery of new educational resources.
  8. Advancement of Centres of Excellence in Hangzhou, Kazakhstan, Columbus, and Budapest.
  9. Refinement of event strategy, including Paddle Games 2030.

BR presented the athletes' committee elections 2025:

- Current elected members: Katie Vincent (Canada), Sebastian Brendel (Germany), Emma Wiggs (Great Britain), Eslam Jahedi (Iran).
- Canoe Slalom selections are pending, will be in Penrith (Australia).
- Propose to the BoD in October candidates.
- Proposal to add four advisory athletes for broader discipline representation supported

Next Steps: BoD agreed to explore adding advisory members and revisit the topic at the next meeting.

### **4. Finance**

#### **ICF Budget and Expenses**

- ICF operates on a two-year budget exceeding €13 million; 21% spent by the end of August.
- Major expenditures, including the digital ecosystem, rebranding, and the 2026 Congress, will all be placed within the second half of the two year budget which is the reason for the current conservative position.

#### **Sponsor Contracts and ICF revenue**

- The BYD sponsor contract expires next year; negotiations indicate continued support through 2028.
- K4 was replaced by Flying Eagle as a merchandising sponsor, maintaining expected income levels.
- Revenue generation, particularly from TV rights and YouTube, is exceeding expectations.

#### **Finance Commission Activities**

- The Finance Commission (FC) will conduct a review of the budget structure to more closely align future budget structure with organisational projects.

- IN the context of the organisational review, the FC is reviewing statutes, financial regulations, and compliance; further meetings planned to finalise proposals. As well as deeply analysing outcomes of previous ASOIF governance reviews and looking to further enhance best practice for the ICF

## **5. Development**

CF presented the Development updates.

- Columbus, GA Centre of Excellence, focused on local school outreach and technical support by the ICF Freestyle Committee, is the most advanced. Fuyang and Hanschult are also recognised centres.
- ICF is finalising a memorandum of understanding for the Kazakhstan Centre.
- Thailand centre continues as a regional hub without formal designation.
- Talent Identification Programme (TIP) now includes ongoing athlete and coach development, culminating in a camp at Hangzhou Centre of Excellence.
- TPI integrates safeguarding, nutrition, social media management, and volunteer training in partnership with local universities.
- To address gender imbalance, the WISH Programme is advancing the promotion of women in coaching. Seminars are scheduled for 2025 in South Africa, Guatemala, Uzbekistan, Togo, and China.
- National Federations are strongly encouraged to apply for Olympic Solidarity and Olympic Athlete Scholarships to support athlete pathways; Bolivia in one of these examples.
- Sustainability efforts include recruiting new sustainability staff following a recent vacancy, continuing DECK-related webinars, workshops, and the DECK Final Conference
- Oceania Women's Symposium will be hosted by Paddle Australia at the ICF Canoe Slalom World Championship in Sydney on 30 September.

JE presented the Paracanoe updates:

- Updates include a grant-funded initiative in Cairo, expanded participation from Jordan and UAE, a classification course in Japan, and upcoming course in Chile.
- The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is funding classification research
- ICF supported two new national federations - Cyprus and Singapore - to participate in the Paracanoe World Championships in Milan for the first time, and as well as in the first official Marathon Championships in Georgia.

BoD proposal: AJ proposed to standardise slalom coaching education in line with the Sprint model.

## **6. Sport**

LRC presented the evolution of the Olympic Qualification System (OQS).

- OQS framework under development, including hybrid qualification methods - direct continental qualification and quotas allocated from ranking.
- Working Group (WG) met 16 times and held consultation sessions with National Federations in Poznań and Milan.
- A revised draft OQS was created following feedback received in Milan.

**Timeline:**

- **8 September:** WG confirmed additional time was needed to prepare final recommendations.
- **By end of week:** Consolidated feedback is expected.
- **15 September:** Final internal review by the WG.
- **19 September:** Final document to be submitted to the BoD.
- **23 September:** BoD meeting to review and endorse the proposed system.
- **October:** Following BoD endorsement, the system will be submitted to the IOC to review - approval is expected by November.

TK emphasised the importance of meeting this deadline to ensure timely completion of the process.

**RP presented the Paddle Game**

Paddle Games every 4 years, bringing all disciplines together.

- Australia, France, and Spain have expressed interest in hosting, with Australia currently the most advanced in its preparations. The event would feature 10 disciplines over 10 days, staged across multiple venues, with participation expected from approximately 7,700 athletes and entourages.
- GS, Canoe Polo Chair, raised concerns on scheduling, costs for non-Olympic disciplines, and risk of losing New Zealand as host. Suggested maintaining flexibility and considering separate World Championships.
- Feasibility study will assess technical, financial, and scheduling factors, with input from all disciplines and stakeholders.
- The study is planned for completion within three months, with three candidate host countries.

Recommendation from the BoD is required in the selection of the consulting agency.

**Decision: The BoD voted unanimously in favour of hiring a Consulting Agency to conduct a feasibility study for the Paddle Games.**

**7. Paddle Worldwide Launch - Naming conventions**

RP presented the Paddle Worldwide launch with a focus on the renaming of disciplines to align with the new organisational name.

- Paddle Worldwide launch unifies all paddle sports under one brand.
- Naming conventions create clear, consistent, and marketable names across disciplines and events.
- Aims to improve global recognition, simplify communication, and boost sponsorship/media opportunities.
- Rebranding follows Congress-endorsed transition from ICF to Paddle Worldwide.
- Concerns were raised by GS, Chair of Canoe Polo, about renaming the discipline, citing risks to its identity, history, and branding.
- He requested naming flexibility, as being considered for Dragon Boat and Stand-Up Paddle.
- Additional concerns included overuse of "paddle" and limited clarity in some markets.



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- RF put forward a recommendation to revisit the topic with Marketing experts
- Any changes will require statutory updates and IOC coordination.

**BoD agreed to consult further with committees that raised concern, especially Canoe Polo and Slalom - while continuing to advance the process of the Paddle Worldwide launch.**

#### **8. 2026 ICF Congress, Schedule**

- Opening ceremony is scheduled for 26 August, with Congress sessions on 27-28 August, following the World Championships.
- Schedule also includes ExCo and BoD meeting, as well as discussions on the Organisational Review.
- Congress will be held in a hybrid format to enable both in-person and remote participation, supporting quorum and broader global inclusion.
- Survey indicates around 60 delegates from 28 federations are planning to attend.
- Confirmation of participation is expected from 35 National Federations.
- Arrangements are being made for hotel bookings and visa support, particularly for nations facing travel constraints.
- Accommodation costs are high, but efforts are underway to negotiate better rates and provide flexible options.
- Congress is planned for 1.5 days to reduce costs, with the option to extend if controversial topics arise.
- Final confirmations from NFs are expected next month.

**The BoD expressed support for the proposed Congress timeline, with no objection.**

#### **9. Event Allocation**

MS presented allocations for upcoming 2026 ICF Canoe Ocean Racing (COR) World Cups:

Kuantan, Pahang	Malaysia (MAS)	17-19 July 2026
Tahiti	Tahiti (TAH)	1-2 August 2026
Molokabra	Brazil (BRA)	September 2026
Reunion	France (FRA)	France (FRA)

**Decision: The ICF BoD voted unanimously in favour of approving all the allocations presented for the 2026 ICF COR World Cups.**

#### **10. Closing Remarks**

Meeting Schedule

- Next board meeting scheduled for 23 September.
- Steering Committee Meeting proposed for 2 December.
- ExCo meeting proposed for 3 - 4 December in Budapest.
- Board meeting in March 2026 will be in person, with Azerbaijan offering to host.





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**Budapest Office Opening**

- Official opening planned for mid-November, pending confirmation from Hungarian Prime Minister.