



***MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
HELD IN HANGZHOU, CHINA
4 March 2025***

INTERNATIONAL CANOE FEDERATION (ICF)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN HANGZHOU, CHINA

04 March 2025

Overview

This was the first meeting of the ICF Board of Directors in 2025, held in presence on 4 March in Hangzhou, China. A quorum was formed in line with the ICF Statutes, with 26 Board members.

Agenda

1. Introduction and Welcome to the new elected Board of Directors Members
2. Housekeeping
3. ICF President's Activities & Information
4. ICF Secretary General's Activities & Information
5. Answers about Questions concerning Each Board Member's Reports
6. 2024 Closing Financial Accounts
7. ICF Debt Management Policy
8. Innovation Fund Policy
9. ICF Structure & Office Development
10. 2025 ITOs Nomination list
11. ICF Events Allocation
 - Presentation of the Process
 - List of intention to bid received from National Federations
 - Events Allocation (Decision at the meeting)
12. Ocean Racing Committee Members Nominations
13. ICF Development & Excellence Training Centres / Hubs
14. ICF Development Programme Policies
15. Gender Equality & Inclusion Management - IOC & ICF Survey Reports
16. 2028 Olympic Qualification System – Presentation
17. Paris 2024 Olympic Games, IOC figures & analysis
18. Other Business
19. Organisational Review
20. Conclusion



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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
Luciano Buonfiglio	LB	Vice President	ITA
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
Branko Lovric	BL	Continental Representative - EUR	CRO
Andrej Jelenc	AJ	Continental Representative - EUR	SLO
Jovana Stanojevic	JS	Continental Representative - EUR	SRB
Budiman Setiawan	BS	Continental Representative - ASI	INA
Danielle Woodward	DW	Continental Representative - OCE	AUS
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
Maree Burnett	MB	Oceania Canoe Association President	NZL
Olubunmi Ola Oluode	OO	Continental Representative - AFR	NGR
Dr. Luk Wai-Hung	LWH	Dragon Boat Commission Chair	HKG

Excused:

Sebastian Gomez	SG	Pan American Canoe Federation President	URG
Joao Manuel Da Costa Alegre Afonso	JDC	Confederation of African Canoeing President	STP
Martha Hernandez Sanches	MHS	Continental Representative - PAM	MEX
Manuela Gawehn	MG	Wildwater Canoeing Committee Chair	GER
Victor G. Ruiz	VR	Continental Representative - PAM	PUR
Ahmed Mahamoud Abdoukader	AMA	Continental Representative - AFR	DJI

1. Introduction and Welcome

- TK welcomed everyone and noted the absence of Joao Manual Da Costa Alegre Afonso, Sebastian Gomez, Ahmed Mahamoud Abdoukader, Victor G. Ruiz, Martha Hernandez Sanches, and Manuela Gawehn due to commitments. He introduced Mr. Jin Chenglong as the chief representative from the ICF office in China and thanked him for his hospitality and support.

2. Housekeeping

- RP outlined the meeting format, including a formal morning session for updates and decisions, an interactive afternoon for discussion, and a post-lunch tour of the new office and virtual sports facility, followed by a dinner invitation from the Chinese Canoe Association.
- He provided an overview of the iPad-based voting system and updates on iPad usage to support board members with ICF activities, highlighting Narelle Henderson as the dedicated support person within the ICF administration.

3. ICF President's Activities & Information

3.1. Organisational Review

- Governance and organisational review structured into key areas and topics for in-depth analysis.
- Experts will be engaged to ensure a thorough and effective review

3.2. Azerbaijan Whitewater Stadium Development

- Site visits conducted with key leadership from the Azerbaijan federation and government.
- ICF to provide technical advice and consulting support for selecting engineering firms and developing a tender.
- Project aims to establish a sustainable business model for whitewater stadiums and multi-discipline venues.
- While typically a 2–3 year timeline, the local federation and government aim for earlier completion.
- Project submission for official approval expected in the coming months.

3.3. LA 2028 Games Proposal

- Proposal to include two additional 5K long-distance events in the LA28 Olympic programme.
- Submission to the Olympic Programme Commission scheduled for 31 March 2025.
- Adjustments made to emphasise financial benefits and additional competition days using the existing venue.

3.4. IOC Updates

- Esports Olympic Games postponed to 2027 and upcoming IOC Presidential election noted.
- Concerns raised over changes in the Olympic Movement, reinforcing the need to build new strategic partnerships and reduce reliance on IOC revenue distribution.

4. ICF Secretary General's Activities & Information

RP presented the key point from the administration's updates.

4.1. ICF Headquarters Budapest

- Hungarian HQ plans finalised, pending building owner approval.
- Recruitment to begin after ensuring compliance with Hungarian labour laws. With the experience of opening the office in Hangzhou, TK pointed out that it takes a settling-in period that should not be underestimated before the new office can work effectively. Concrete support is needed to help the new employees settle in.

4.2. Operational Efficiency & Collaboration

- Microsoft Suite implemented across all committees and administration to support greater collaboration and better workflows.

4.3. Playbook & Budget Alignment

- Playbook in development to standardise procedures across committees and support alignment with ICF strategy.
- Led by Director of Operations Cyril Nivel (CN), with ongoing feedback encouraged.

4.4. Partnerships & Collaborations

- EPFL Lausanne – venue sustainability.
- Zhejiang University, Hangzhou – youth education programmes.

4.5. Virtual Esports Games

- Launch postponed to 2027, allowing strategic refinement.
- Exploring partnerships with esports publishers

4.6. TV & Broadcast Strategy

- Two Circles appointed as broadcast agency for its strong remote production model, cost efficiency, and innovative digital services with robust distribution capabilities.
- OTT platform launch set for 2026.

4.7. YouTube & Social Media Growth

- The ICF received 432% subscriber increase in 2024 making it the fastest growing international federation on the platform.
- With the new team in China the focus will be to strengthen engagement with Chinese social media platforms

4.8. Digitising Archival Footage

- World Championships & World Cups footage being digitised ready for OTT platform.
- Potential collaboration with Alibaba AI tagging to improve search and access.

5. Board Members Reports

Full reports available in the following [Appendix](#).

6. 2024 Closing Financial Accounts

- Deloitte continues to enhance financial processes and run day to day accounting requirements
- The Finance Commission Chair MB expressed the committees confidence in financial management improvements, recognising RP's contributions and Deloitte's role in strengthening reporting.
- Due diligence was completed on BCV as the selected financial institution, with Board approval requested for investment authority delegation, which can be withdrawn at any time.

Decision: The Board unanimously approved BCV as the official manager of the ICF investment portfolio.

7. ICF Debt Management Policy

RP presented the approved debt management policy from the ExCo.

8. Innovation Funds Policy

- RP introduced the Innovation Fund, which aims to drive change in the sport by supporting projects that enhance event experience, use data in new ways, and innovate in officiating.
- The ICF ExCo appointed a working group who will review proposals and manage the allocation of funds.

9. ICF Structure & Office Development

RP presented updates on ICF's office structures.

10. 2025 ITOs Nomination list

LRC presented the 2025 ITOs list for the following disciplines.

- Canoe Sprint / Paracanoe
- Canoe Marathon
- Canoe Polo
- Dragon Boat
- Canoe Freestyle
- Canoe Ocean Racing
- Stand Up Paddling
- Wildwater Canoeing
- Paracanoe – Head of Classification nominations & 2025 ICF Classifier list

Decision: The ICF BoD voted unanimously in favour of approving all the proposed lists.

11. ICF Events Allocation

11.1. Presentation of the process

- BV presented the new event allocation process, designed for greater flexibility and alignment with ICF strategic goals. The process removes strict time constraints, allowing discussions and approvals to continue beyond Board meetings as needed. He outlined the phased approach:

Open Dialogue Phase:

- ICF engages stakeholders to identify and attract potential hosts.
- Involves discussions with technical committees, ICF administration and relevant parties.

Targeted Dialogue Phase:

- Direct negotiations with identified hosts.
- Led by technical committees with support from ICF administration.
- Proposals refined and reviewed for Competition Commission for approval at the board of directors.

Increased Flexibility:

- Removal of strict time constraints from the rules.
- Discussions and approvals can continue beyond Board meetings as needed.

11.2. Overview of the received intention

TK presented the full list of all received intention to bid from the National Federations. Most of them are still at the Open Dialogue phase.

11.3. Event allocation

LRC presented the following list of proposed allocations based on the recommendation of the ICF administration, the concerned committee and a final review by the Competition Commission:

Event	City (NF)	Proposed Decision
2025 ICF Ocean Racing World Cups (2 stages)	La Vila Joiosa (ESP)	Final Allocation
	Reunion (Fra)	Final Allocation
2026 ICF Stand Up World Cup	Torbay, Devon (GBR)	Final Allocation
2026 ICF Canoe Sprint World Cup	Halifax or Montreal (CAN)	Allocation pending on conditions set by the ICF

2026 ICF Wildwater Canoeing World Cup	La Plagne (FRA)	Allocation pending on conditions set by the ICF
2027 ICF Canoe Slalom Junior & U23 World Championships	Pattaya (THA)	Final Allocation
2028 ICF Canoe Slalom Junior & U23 World Championships	Ivrea (ITA)	Final Allocation
2028 ICF Stand Up Paddling World Championships	Balatonfüred (HUN)	Final Allocation
2028 ICF Canoe Slalom Junior & U23 World Championships	Krakow (POL)	Final Allocation moved from 2028 to 2029

The ICF BoD voted unanimously in favour of approving all proposed allocations.

12. Ocean Racing Committee Members Nominations

Decisions: The BoD unanimously approved Anne Cairns (SAM) as a member of the Ocean Racing Committee.

The BoD unanimously approved Eduardo Luís Peixinho Reis (POR) as an advisor of the Ocean Racing Committee.

13. ICF Development & Excellence Centres

CF presented the ICF Development programme updates and the new Excellence Centres.

- ICF Excellence Training Centres established in China, Kazakhstan, and Thailand, providing facilities for athlete and coach development.
- Emphasis on detailed planning, feasibility studies, and partnerships with local stakeholders, including universities, to ensure long-term success.
- Focus on developing educational modules and training programmes aligned with ICF development policies to enhance athlete and coach opportunities.
- Need to secure financial and material resources, ensure federation and stakeholder commitment, and provide staff training for long-term continuity.
- Centres promote sustainability, health, and well-being, with potential to serve as legacy projects for major events.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) developed to assess impact at local, regional, and international levels.

14. ICF Development Programme Policies

CF presented the updated development programme policies, emphasising gender equality and age criteria.

- Athletes should be 20-23 years old at the start of the Olympic cycle, and every effort will be made to maintain gender balance.
- Talent Identification Programme (TIP) support promising athletes and highlighted the role of national federations in their development.
- Emphasis on the importance of structured follow-up by the ICF office, including performance monitoring in competitions.

Decision: The ICF BoD unanimously approved the revised policy.

15. Gender Equality & Inclusion Management - IOC & ICF Survey Reports

CF shared the results of the gender equality and inclusion survey, noting that the ICF was listed as one of the top five international federations in terms of gender equality.

- Gender balance is strong, but gaps remain in coaching and leadership roles.
- Plans to attract and retain female athletes and coaches include regional symposiums, female coaching courses, and portrayal guidelines.
- Women's Symposium 2026 announced as a key initiative, with continued collaboration needed for progress.

16. 2028 Olympic Qualification System – Presentation

TK and LRC presented an update to the Olympic Qualification system with the following key points outlined:

- The Olympic qualification system combines world ranking and direct quota allocation from specific events to ensure fairness and competitiveness.
- Stakeholder consultation, including national federations and continental associations, is key to refining the system.
- Final documentation is targeted for completion by June, pending IOC approval once the new President is in position.
- The final draft will be shared with continental and national federations after Executive Committee review.

17. Paris 2024 Olympic Games, IOC figures & Analysis

17.1. IOC Evaluation and Event Performance

TK introduced the recently published IOC evaluation, which assessed not only the sport as a whole but also the performance of each individual event.

- Evaluation covered 14 different criteria, including TV broadcasting, digital media, and ticket sales.
- Challenge of comparing figures from Paris with those from Tokyo or Rio due to the presentation of results.

- Assessment provided valuable insights into each event's popularity and performance.
- Slalom and kayak cross performed particularly well, while K4 made less impact.
- Ticket sales were strong, with 99.8% of tickets sold, though a significant portion was purchased by local spectators.

17.2. The Increasing Importance of Digital Engagement

TK emphasised that digital engagement is becoming a crucial factor in evaluating event performance.

- Social media, plays a significant role in measuring audience interaction and global reach.
- Investing in digital initiatives is essential, especially for underperforming events.
- Enhancing digital storytelling to attract and retain audiences, making the sport more accessible and appealing to a wider global audience.

17.3. Expanding the Sport's Global Reach

TK outlined the need to promote the sport outside Europe, with a specific focus on expanding its presence in Brazil and China.

- Targeted efforts in these markets could significantly boost participation and viewership.
- Importance of scheduling events in Los Angeles at optimal times to maximise global viewership and media impact.

17.4. Innovation and Future Olympic Strategy

TK stressed the need for a forward-thinking strategy that embraces innovation while preserving tradition.

- Lessons from the success of kayak cross highlight the potential for exploring new event formats for future Olympic Games to keep the sport dynamic and engaging.
- Proposal to establish a working group to develop the future Olympic programme.
- Focus on innovation while maintaining the sport's core elements.
- Inclusion of external experts and media representatives may be considered.

17.5. Strengthening Digital Presence and Market Growth

RP highlighted the growing importance of digital engagement and social media in shaping the sport's visibility and fan base.

- Emphasis on collaboration with external experts and invest in digital initiatives to strengthen the sport's online presence.
- Discussion on the challenges and opportunities within the North American market, noting that strong personalities and national identities are essential for promoting the sport.
- Need to ensure that any future events must first be proven within ICF competitions with strong audience engagement, athlete participation and commercial plan.



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- Only proven events will make it onto the Olympic Programme.

17.6. Athlete Development and International Collaboration

TK emphasised the importance of developing structured athlete programmes in populous countries like China and India.

- Customised training and collaboration with federations will be key to supporting and nurturing talent in these regions.
- Discussions highlighted the importance of working closely with influential IOC members particularly those with the in the Olympic programme Commission.

17.7. Conclusion and Next Steps

TK concluded the Paris evaluation emphasising the importance of implementing short-term improvements for Los Angeles 2028 while developing long-term strategies for Brisbane 2032.

- Encouragement all participants to continue reviewing the IOC evaluation data.
- Emphasis on staying engaged in future discussions to ensure the sport's growth and success.

18. Other Business

18.1. 2025 ICF Jury Member Nomination

TK presented to the BoD the jury allocation for various events in 2025.

- Highlighted the need for additional jury members.
- Emphasis on reducing travel expenses and carbon emissions.

Jury Chair	Jury	Jury
ICF Canoe Freestyle World Championships - Plattling, Germany / June 16-21		
Ruud Heijnselaar	Dajana Pefestorff	Oliver Bungars
ICF Junior and U23 Wildwater Canoeing World Championships - Solkan, Slovenia / July 1-5		
Andrej Jelenc	Manuela Gawehn	TBC
ICF Junior and U23 Canoe Slalom World Championships - Foix, France / July 8-13		
Lluis Rabaneda	Jean Zoungana	Ahmed Mahamoud Abdoukader
ICF Junior and U23 Canoe Sprint World Championships - Montemor-o-Velho, Portugal / July 23-27		
Jovana Stanojevic	Ruud Heijnselaar	Marian Sarbu
The World Games - Canoe Marathon - Chengdu, People's Republic of China / August 9-10		
Li Xin	Wai-Hung Luk	Thomas Konietzko
The World Games - Dragon Boat - Chengdu, People's Republic of China / August 9-10		
Ruud Heijnselaar	Wai-Hung Luk	Thomas Konietzko
The World Games - Canoe Polo - Chengdu, People's Republic of China / August 13-16		
Wai-Hung Luk	Ruud Heijnselaar	Li Xin
ICF Canoe Sprint & Paracanoe World Championships - Milan, Italy / August 20-24		
Cecilia Farias	Maree Burnett	Bridgitte Hartley
ICF Canoe Marathon World Championships - Gyor, Hungary / September 4-7		
Terry Best	Noemi Horvath	TBC
ICF Dragon Boat Club Crew World Championships - Ruse, Bulgaria / September 18-21		
TBC	TBC	TBC
ICF Wildwater Canoeing Sprint World Championships - Ceske Budejvice, Czechia / September 19-21		
Jean Zoungana	Andrej Jelenc	Marian Sarbu
ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships - Penrith, Australia / October 1-6		
Lluis Rabaneda	Luciano Buonfiglio	Danielle Woodward
ICF Canoe Ocean Racing World Championships - Durban, South Africa / October 17-19		
Bridgitte Hartley	TBC	TBC
ICF Stand Up Paddling World Championships - Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates / October 29 - November 2		
Ahmed Mahamoud Abdoukader	Ola Oluode	Greg Smale

18.2. Erasmus Plus Projects

LRC discussed the progress of the Erasmus Plus projects, which aim to generate revenue and provide support to national federations. He underlined the importance of gathering project ideas and collaborating with consultants to secure funding.

For 2025, the ICF coordinated two applications:

Project	Description	Leader and Partners
Excellence Centres network in Pyrenees	This project aims to develop two international excellence centres in Pyrenees (La Seu & Pau) responding to the need to develop specific skills such as water safety and training. The final aims is to develop a replicable and sustainable model.	Canoe Club La Seu (ESP) La Seu University (ESP) Spain, NF (ESP) Canoe Club Pau (FRA) France, NF (FRA) Portugal, NF (POR) ICF as a supporter
Kayak and kids	This project aims to promote canoeing as an inclusive sport by transforming it into an educational, recreational, and accessible activity. It promotes inclusive activities that create a direct connection between children and their natural surroundings. Specifically, the project plans to integrate canoeing into the school curriculum in pilot areas. This approach will enable a significant number of primary school students to benefit from the program during school hours.	Denmark, NF (DEN) Hungary, NF (HUN) Azerbaijan, NF (AZE) Egypt, NF (EGY) ICF as a supporter

The decision by the European Union is due by the end of August 2025, with implementation in September 2025 by all partners.

18.3. IPC - Order Proposal

RP mentioned that the ICF received a letter from the IPC regarding the Paralympic Order.

- Opportunity to recognise an outstanding member of the community and nominate them forward for the Paralympic Order, subject to the board's approval.

Decision: The Board of Directors unanimously agreed to support the nomination for John Edwards ICF Paracanoe Chair.

18.4. Invoice and account

LX mentioned that the ICF is committed to providing as much support as possible while respecting the autonomy of continental federations and committees in utilising their allocated budgets.

- Emphasis on transparency and accountability as key responsibilities of the ICF.
- Request for continental federations and sports committees submit the necessary proofs and invoices in a timely manner.
- Allocation of new budgets will only proceed with the correct paperwork and project planning provided.

18.5. Canoe Freestyle

As per Competition rule 1.9.2, TB presented the proposal of the list of Events for the 2025 Master World Championships:

Men Over 40	Women Over 40
Men Over 50	Women Over 50
Men Over 60	Women Over 60

No boat restrictions: K1, C1 or OC are accepted in each event.

Decision: The Board of Directors unanimously agreed to support the proposed list of events for the 2025 Master World Championships.

18.6. Advisor for mental health

JG proposed appointing advisors for mental health and para canoe medical issues due to the lack of expertise in their committee.

- TK supported the idea, noting that BoD must approve it in writing.

19. Organisational Review

19.1. Working Group Formation

RP presented the proposed structure and timeline for the working groups for the Organisational Review. The first meeting is scheduled for April to define responsibilities and areas of expertise.

19.2. Timeline

- April to November 2025: The working groups will operate during this period, focusing on their respective areas and responsibilities.
- December 2025: Final outcomes and proposed structures will be consolidated and prepared for discussion.
- December 2025 – January 2026: Town hall meetings will be held with stakeholders and National Federations to review and refine the proposals.
- March 2026: Final confirmation of the proposals by the Board.

- 31 March 2026: Submission of proposed amendments as motions for Congress.
- July 2026: Approval of the proposals at Congress in Oklahoma City.

19.3. Areas of Focus

TK presented the five focus areas of the Organisational Review:

- Governance and Decision-Making Enhancement
- Statutes, Rules and Standardisation
- Development Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement
- Event Delivery Evolution and Innovation
- Addressing Cross-Over Challenges

19.4. Steering Group

The Steering Group was appointed to oversee the Organisational Review of the President, Vice Presidents, and the Secretary General.

This group will guide the process, ensuring key topics are properly examined and that informed, well-developed proposals are brought forward.

19.5. Discussion points from the Board of Directors

An open discussion was held to gather suggestions and insights regarding the organisational review.

- MB noted that previous reviews had been undermined by political interference and personal agendas, which affected outcomes.
- Several members highlighted the value of engaging a consultant to bring external expertise and credibility to the process.
- There was strong agreement on the importance of internal input, with a recommendation to first identify key issues from within the organisation before engaging external support.
- A balance between internal insight and external expertise was seen as essential to ensure a comprehensive, effective, and credible review.
- RP underlined the importance of open dialogue, broad stakeholder engagement, and addressing both political and technical dimensions of the review.
- GS suggested beginning with less controversial topics to build early momentum before addressing more complex matters such as governance structure.
- DW proposed aligning the governance review with the broader strategic direction outline in Fit Fir Future Evolution to ensure future decision-making bodies are fit for purpose.
- A decision was taken to establish working groups for each of the core topics, with support from the ICF Administration and external consultants where necessary.
- TK emphasised that the governance structure was the most critical and potentially sensitive issue and proposed that it be through a distinct approach.
- There was consensus that the structure should be addressed carefully, and that significant

external expertise would be required to ensure a robust and objective review.

- TK proposed appointing an external consultant to review the organisational structure—someone with specialised governance experience (not necessarily the ICF's current legal advisor).
- RP will lead the process of identifying and appointing qualified experts or consultancy services to support this comprehensive review of the governance structure.

19.6. Working Group Participation Suggestions

- GS proposed to contribute to the topic "Statutes, Rules and Standardisation".
- DW proposed to work with MB on the topic "Reviewing the Governance Structure".
- RF expressed interest in the topic "Event Delivery Evolution and Innovation".
- RF also offered to collaborate with CF on "Development Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement".
- AJ proposed to join either "Development Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement" or "Event Delivery Evolution and Innovation".
- BH proposed to work in the group "Development Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement" or "Event Delivery Evolution and Innovation".

19.7. BoD Approval and Next Steps

The Board agreed on the next steps for the Organisational review process:

- Involvement of ICF Administration: Cyril Nivel, Alessia Cirillo, and Hoichan Kwon will support the process.
- TK proposed appointing a chairperson for each working group.
- Chairs and independent consultants will jointly review their assigned areas.
- RP will send a follow-up letter including the list of potential working group members and consultants to be involved.

20. Conclusion

TK thanked the Chinese Canoe Association for hosting an unforgettable evening. Special recognition was given to former BoD members AJ and JS, honouring their dedication and contribution to the sport.