

Olympic Qualification Working Group

Dear Board Members,

I am writing to propose the establishment of an Olympic Qualification Working Group to review and improve the current Olympic Qualification. I believe that the current Olympic Qualification process can be improved to better support athletes and National Federations and provide a more interesting and exciting experience for our fans around the world as we extend the Olympic Qualification journey. This revised qualification process can also serve as a framework for our non-Olympic disciplines in terms of their qualification for multi-sport events. A good example of this is canoe marathon and canoe polo and their qualification criteria for the World Games.

My proposed framework for the working group includes four main objectives:

1. Link the existing ranking system to the Olympic qualification process for future Olympic Games.
2. Simplify the current Olympic qualification process to make it more understandable and remove the risk of legal ambiguity due to different interpretations.
3. Increase the global appeal of our sport by harnessing the excitement and interest generated by the Olympic Games and promoting more accessible, fan-friendly events.
4. Improve opportunities to fund high performance programmes at national level to support the development of elite athletes.

I believe that linking a ranking system to the Olympic qualification process can create a more transparent and fair process for athletes and provide more support and funding for athletes from underrepresented regions. The working group should explore the possibilities of integrating ranking points from World Cups, continental and national championships. Consideration should also be given to allowing national federations to be included in the rankings as well as individuals. This will reward strength in depth of development and eliminate the possibility of a nation not qualifying a place/quota for the Games due to injury. The ranking system should promote fairness, transparency and accessibility for all athletes, regardless of their country or background. However, it should complement and not replace the World Championships as the main qualifying event.

In addition, the working group should explore the possibilities of streamlining the competition calendar through stronger continental competition series and using the Continental Games as part of the Olympic qualification for all future Olympic Games. This will help to make the preparation for the Olympic Games more coherent and exciting and provide more opportunities for athletes to qualify and showcase their skills.

The streamlining of the competition calendar should also be done with sustainability in mind and take into account ICF's commitment to positive climate action. The above points are in line with the Fit for Future Action Seven: Elevate Competitions.

In addition, the working group should look to maximise the opportunities presented by the recommendations of the Olympic Agenda 2020+5. These offer the chance to make greater use of Olympic branding to support and promote the athletes' journey to the Olympic Games through digital means. This provides significant benefits to all stakeholders involved in the qualification process and offers them with the opportunity to communicate about the Olympic journey.

The working group also needs to consider how we can increase the global appeal of our competition calendar by harnessing the excitement and interest generated by qualifying for the Olympic Games and promoting more accessible, fan-friendly events. This will be done through initiatives such as simplified rules, more exciting formats and a greater focus on the athletes' stories and personalities. By making our sport more accessible and engaging, we can attract new fans and inspire the next generation of athletes and fans.

Always moving forward

Finally, the working group will aim to increase funding for high performance programmes at national level to support the development of elite athletes by creating more opportunities to qualify for the Games.

The working group should be discussed and approved by the ICF Executive Committee, and will undertake ongoing consultation with key stakeholders such as national federations and sponsors. The working group will be supported by myself, the International Events Department and the Growth and Communications Department.

I would like to ask for the Board's support for the establishment of this working group and believe that the proposed improvements will help to create a more transparent, fair and accessible Olympic qualification process for all athletes, while significantly improving the opportunities to promote our sport globally.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Pettit
ICF Secretary General