

**Press Release:**

**International Canoe Federation (ICF) to allow eligible Russian and Belarusian Athletes to Compete as Individual Neutral Athletes**

The International Canoe Federation (ICF) board has made the decision to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes who are not in support of their State's actions in Ukraine, to compete as individual neutral athletes. The decision was taken after extensive consultations within the international canoeing community and consideration of concerns expressed by event organisers.

An independent panel will be set up to consider all applications from Russian and Belarusian athletes wishing to compete as neutral athletes. The timeline for their inclusion in competition will be determined once this independent panel has established the rules and regulations required to consider athlete eligibility and following confirmation of anti-doping procedures by ITA.

The ICF's decision to allow neutral athletes is based on the human right of individuals to compete.

Following the Federation's decision, ICF President Thomas Konietzko said: "The autonomy of sport must be respected and individuals should not be condemned for the actions of their state. However, only athletes that meet strict criteria will be allowed to return to the water."

"The entire canoeing family continues to condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the actions of the Russian and Belarusian governments in Ukraine. Over the past 14 months, we have worked tirelessly to support the canoeing family of Ukraine both on and off the water and will continue to do so," continued the ICF President.

After extensive discussions, with all key stakeholders including ICF event organisers, the ICF has taken the concerns raised by organisers as an opportunity to adopt additional measures for the safe organisation of competitions and the safety of athletes.

The ICF Board will maintain the ban on all Russian and Belarussian canoe officials. The officials will not be allowed to sit on any official capacity or events.

The ICF's decision demonstrates a commitment to upholding the principles of sport while condemning the actions of the Russian and Belarusian governments in Ukraine. The ICF will continue to work towards supporting the canoeing family of Ukraine while ensuring that the autonomy of sport is respected.

Full Statement here

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