



CONTINENTAL COUNCIL MEETING
 Fairmont Hotel, VIP A Meeting Room, Singapore
 Thursday 17th March 2022 – 09h30 to 13h30 SGT

MINUTES

CC members in attendance:

SÖRLING Petra	ITTF President
AL-MOHANNADI Khalil	Executive Vice-President
AZEVEDO Alaor	Executive Vice-President
LIU Guoliang (via Zoom ®)	Executive Vice-President
MAEHARA Masahiro	Executive Vice-President
MESHREF Alaa	Executive Vice-President
NATRAN Roland	Executive Vice-President
OSHODI Wahid	Executive Vice-President
RYU Seung-Min	IOC Member
EL-SALHY Khaled	African Table Tennis Federation President
MOURA Pedro	European Table Tennis Union Acting President
VILA Juan (via Zoom ®)	ITTF Americas President
IRELAND Graeme	ITTF-Oceania Acting President

Staff in attendance:

DAINTON Steve	ITTF Group CEO
CALIN Raul	ITTF Secretary General

Invited staff (in order of intervention):

BESSAH Mounir	ITTF Members Relations Director (Section 5)
FELEGYI Gabor	ITTF Competitions Director (section 6)

Apologies:

PRIMORAC Zoran	Athletes Commission (AC) Chair
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1. Welcome and Opening

1.1. President’s opening remarks

Ms SÖRLING welcomed the Continental Council (**CC**) members in attendance highlighting that this is the first time the CC can meet physically since its creation at the 2021 AGM in Houston. Ms SÖRLING updated the Continental Presidents on the key decisions taken at the EC meeting conducted the two previous days and gave a brief outline of the work done since the last meeting, particularly in the Ukraine war crisis. The EC portfolios were also presented for the Continental Presidents to know the different areas of responsibility of the EC members.

1.2. EC Member in charge of CC remarks

Mr AL-MOHANNADI also gave a warm welcome to his CC colleagues, suggesting all continental federations should be working closely with the ITTF as one. Thinking on the ITTF Centenary coming in 2026, Mr AL-MOHANNADI wanted to reflect on the number of Associations that don’t have the basics to practise table tennis: equipment and financial resources to compete in international events. Mr AL-MOHANNADI suggested he would like to work closely with Dr MESHREF, as the EC member in charge of Development, to ensure table tennis equipment is accessible for all Member Associations as a first step, and on participating in international events as a second step.

1.3. Roll Call

The CC noted the attendance of all EC members except the AC Chair, who was travelling, and the Continental Presidents / Acting Presidents.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted without further remarks.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

3.1. Approval of the Minutes from the last meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting were adopted, and the decisions taken following the online voting were formally adopted.

20220317-CC-01

The Continental Council approved the Minutes of the CC Meeting held on 16th January 2022.

20220317-CC-02

The Continental Council confirmed the decisions taken online on 5-7 February 2022 regarding the Qualification System for Chengdu 2022 World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals and Granada 2022 World Para Table Tennis Championships.

3.2. Business arising from the Minutes

Already included in the agenda.

4. Reports from Continental Federations Presidents

4.1. Americas

The CC noted the report of Mr VILA on behalf of the ITTF Americas, which included an update on the Durban 2023 WTTTC Finals qualification pathway, with the Caribbean Qualification being already held in March Cuba. This event will be followed by the Central American Qualification in Guatemala in May, and the South American Qualification in Colombia, also in May. The regional events will be followed by the Continental Championships that will be held in October-November in Chile.

The CC noted also the planned Pan American Junior Championships in Argentina, the Cadets in Ecuador and the Under 13 in the Dominican Republic.

Mr VILA continued his presentation by speaking about the preparations for World Table Tennis Day, with activities on the border between Colombia and Venezuela, as well as between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Belize and Guatemala, hosting events for peace.

To conclude, Mr VILA touched on the upcoming Annual General Assembly of ITTF Americas and the plans for a new website.

4.2. Africa

Mr EL-SALHY updated the CC on the planned WTTTC qualification pathway, which will start in April in the Central Region, with the other four African regions hosting their events in May. The African Championships are planned for the month of October in Algeria, pending of course on the final decision about the dates for the Chengdu 2022 WTTTC Finals.

Mr EL-SALHY continued his presentation highlighting the aim of ATTF to not use WR as the main qualification criteria for the Olympic Games as it is very difficult for the African athletes to find resources to compete internationally, hence the preference to have specific qualification events.

To conclude, Mr EL-SALHY reported on the ongoing work to finalise the Master Continental Agreement (MCA) with the ITTF.

4.3. Oceania

Mr IRELAND, acting president of ITTF-Oceania, reported on the situation in Oceania, where no events were hosted due to the pandemic restrictions. The 2021 Oceania Championships were cancelled, and the aim is to have the 2022 Oceania Championships in the second half of 2022. Mr IRELAND also reported on the upcoming elections in ITTF-Oceania due for the end of April 2022 following the unfortunate decease of Mr Anthony HO in July 2021.

4.4. Europe

Mr Pedro MOURA, acting president of ETTU, reported on the successful Europe Top-16, the marquee event for the continent, which was held during the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Despite the difficulties, the event went very well. Mr MOURA reported also on the self-suspensions of the ETTU President, Mr LEVITIN, the ETTU Vice-President, Mr Vladimir SAMSONOV, and the Athletes Commission Chair, Ms Polina MIKHAILOVA, the decision of the ETTU Executive Board (EB) to suspend the participation of the Russian clubs in the ETTU Champions League and updated the CC colleagues on the support being made available to the Ukraine Table Tennis community, not only from the ETTU but from many Member Associations. Mr MOURA expressed his aim that all athletes can return to competition as soon as possible. To conclude, Mr MOURA reported on the first-ever ETTU U-13 Challenge, which will be played in a mixed team format and is a test event for a potential European Championships U-13 in the future, and the European Youth Championships to be held in Serbia in July and the European Championships to be held in Munich in May in a multi-sport event format, having secured already important TV visibility.

4.5. Asia

Mr AL-MOHANNADI reflected on his first months of presidency in the ATTU since the elections in October 2021.

Mr AL-MOHANNADI reported on the working group being established under the leadership of Sheikha HAYAT from Bahrain, to review the ATTU Constitution, the plans for the ATTU EB meeting to be held in Doha at the end of March, the Asian Cup planned in Thailand in the second half of 2022 and the upcoming Asian Games in Hangzhou.

The CC also noted the two Competition Managers Seminars being organised in Asia, and in regard to 2023, the plans to host the Asian Championships in Korea.

Ms SÖRLING thanked the Continental Presidents for their reports and passed the word to Mr DAINTON, who reflected on the main goals of the newly created Continental Council: discussing about World Championships, Olympic Games and Development. Mr DAINTON reminded the Continental Presidents that, together with the Secretary General, Mr CALIN, he is ready to support and discuss any matters they want to address and welcomed them to Singapore.

5. **Master Continental Agreements (MCAs)**

The CC noted the report of Mr Mounir BESSAH, Members Relations Director, which touched on the MCAs, the highlights in each of the Continents and the next steps.

In relation to the MCAs, Mr BESSAH highlighted the aim is to streamline the contractual relations with all five continents by developing a new concept that stimulates meritocracy-driven support and instils good governance, based on the ASOIF model. The ITTF aims to have the global Table Tennis community better connected and aligned, pursuing joint goals.

The CC members noted that MCAs have three main pillars of funding: Governance, Events, and Development funding, and will include milestones to be reached to ensure the maximum ITTF contribution.

Speaking about Africa, Mr BESSAH highlighted the extreme dependency on ITTF funding, the structure with five existing regions, the very good participation in the 2021 AGM, the excellent participation in HPD activities and the very successful 2021 ATTF online General Assembly.

Speaking about the Americas, the CC noted the new continental federation structure existing since November 2020, the four regions in the new ITTF Americas, the new website being developed, and the improvement in the Governance objectives set.

From Europe, the CC noted it is one of the continents able to source development funds which are added to the ITTF development funds and organises independently all the events (with its own sponsors). ETTU is also working towards aligning with the ASOIF's good governance objectives.

From Oceania, the CC noted the geographical constraints, the strict closure of borders in 2021 which led to not having physical cross-border activities, the aim to develop the Pacific regions (Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia) and the great achievement in the implementation of the Good Governance objectives set in the MCA, being the leading continent in this area.

As the next steps, the CC noted the planned one-on-one meetings in Singapore, the work on the budgets to finalise MCA agreements for the future, and the plan to sign with Asia, the MCA at the end of March, in Doha, during the ATTU Executive Board meeting.

Dr AZEVEDO highlighted the importance of measuring the results of the programs being implemented, particularly, those subsidized by the ITTF. Dr AZEVEDO indicated it would be good to develop a matrix to be able to compare the historical development of each of the continents, with itself, from year to year, and with the other continents, and for the ITTF to develop mechanisms to calculate the Return on Investment.

Mr EL-SALHY and Mr IRELAND requested clarity about funding for Youth and Para events, not being currently listed in the MCAs. Mr IRELAND suggested it would be good to confirm the overall MCA funding before each year starts, so the CFs can better plan their activities.

Mr DAINTON reported that due to the COVID-19 uncertainties, it was not clear what the available funds would be, adding that with the 2021 elections being held only in November 2021, the new EVP of Finance was only appointed in January 2022, and hence the budget preparations started much later than when the AGM would have been held, traditionally, in May, as it happened in 2017 or 2013.

Mr VILA commented that in the current geopolitical context, the ITTF needs good leadership with effective communication, and expressed his disappointment when some ITTF officers try to distinguish whether someone is an ITTF or an ITTF Americas staff, suggesting that everyone should be working together for the benefit of the sport.

Ms SÖRLING thanked Mr VILA for his clear message and reminded the ITTF is a Services organisation (that should serve its Members).

6. Durban 2023 World Championships Qualification Pathway

The CC noted the presentation of Mr Gabor FELEGYI on the Durban 2023 World Individual Table Tennis Championships qualification pathway.

7. Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

7.1. Presentation from Paris 2024

The CC noted the presentation made by Mr Gilles De La Bourdonnaye, Table Tennis Sport Manager for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and noted the apology of Mr Jean-Philippe GATIEN, Paris 2024 Executive Director of Sports, who also planned to attend the Singapore Smash, but was unable to travel due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The CC noted the introduction of the New Norm and the fact that the Paris 2024 Olympic Games will be the first with the same number of Men and Women competing.

Paris 2024 Games will include open-to-public events, such as the Marathon, and the Opening Ceremony. “*Terre des Jeux*” concept (*Land of the Games*) was introduced.

The CC also noted the organigram of Paris 2024 and was presented with the table tennis venue for the Table Tennis events at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as well as the plans for accommodation for athletes, in the Olympic and Paralympic Village, and for the ITTF family, in designated hotels.

The CC was presented with the Olympic Games schedule by sessions which will take into consideration the main Table Tennis TV consumers markets when planning the finals. The schedule for the Paralympic Games will be developed in the coming months.

Mr RYU asked in regard to a potential test event, and Mr De La Bourdonnaye indicated the goal is to organise an event in August 2023, which would eventually include a Para Table Tennis official competition.

7.2. Qualification System

The CC noted the report of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Qualification System Working Group (**OPGQSWG**), led by Mr RYU Seungmin, which did meet three times since its inception (24th February 8th March and 16th March).

The outcome of the working group deliberations was introduced by Mr CALIN, making references to the IOC Olympic Games Qualification System Guidelines and its principles.

The experience from previous Games Qualifications Systems was also considered when developing the proposal for Paris 2024.

Following the deliberations of the Members of the CC, it was agreed to circulate in writing the proposed system, for ratification via online voting.

The CC also noted that later in the year, they should decide whether the format of play for the Team Event should keep the doubles match, or should become a system of five individual matches, to make the narrative of the Olympic Games better to be understood by the media, and also to align with the other major ITTF Teams Events property, the ITTF World Championships, particularly, now that the Mixed Doubles event is confirmed for Paris 2024 (what means that the Doubles events are present in the Olympic Games programme).

On a question from Mr MAEHARA, Mr CALIN clarified that while the ITTF will list as initial qualifiers the top two athletes of each NOC with a team qualified, it is up to the NOC to confirm or reject them, as the Team Events have NOC quotas, and not athletes’ quotas. Mr CALIN abounded on the fact that the ITTF intends to list as initial qualifiers the top two athletes of each NOC to follow the IOC Qualification System Guidelines, which require the International Federations to ensure that the best players are in the Olympic Games.

Dr MESHREF expressed his concern about the most important ITTF event for the athletes, the World Individual Championships, not counting for the ranking of the athletes for the qualification if the current World Ranking (WR) system is in place, as Durban 2023 will finish before twelve months prior to the cut date for WR selection, which on the current WR system only counts the last 12 months. Dr MESHREF provided additional data on how the current WR system works, how the draws for the WTT events are currently made, with a low number of seeded players,

and how the U-19 participation can overweight senior events participation in terms of WR, suggesting that unless the WR is adjusted, the weight of the WR in the QS shouldn't be greater than the qualification events.

Mr OSHODI, Mr MOURA, Mr EL-SALHY and Ms SÖRLING did comment also on the technical points raised by Dr MESHREF, with Mr MOURA and Mr EL-SALHY pointing additionally at the cost of a qualification pathway excessively weighted towards WR selection.

On the request of Ms SÖRLING, and in response to the different points raised, Mr CALIN commented on the balanced approach suggested with the proposal made by the WG; with a compromise between qualification pathways offered via events, qualification pathways offered via WR, and more importantly, for the fact of providing multiple opportunities for the athletes, pairs, and teams, to qualify for the Olympic Games.

Mr DANTON concluded by thanking the WG for the elaborated and balanced proposal between the strategic goals of the ITTF and its new commercial vehicle to develop an attractive tour, and the tradition and history of the sport, considering that the WG reached an optimal compromise. Ms SÖRLING thanked everyone engaged in this important discussion, and Mr CALIN confirmed the procedure to be followed to confirm the system to be submitted to the IOC for their EB consideration and eventual ratification.

The CC also noted that the Paralympic Games Qualification System will be worked on later once the IPC has published their QS Guidelines.

8. Other Business

8.1. Letter from the ETTU on the Chengdu 2022 Qualification System

The CC noted the letter sent by the ETTU on the Chengdu 2022 QS. Mr MOURA reiterated the offer from ETTU to host the intercontinental stage, so to ensure that the best teams are present in the WTTTC Finals in Chengdu and asked the CC to consider whether they would like to reopen the discussion.

On the request of Ms SÖRLING, Mr CALIN answered that the CC took a decision which stands unless the majority of the CC members wants to change it.

Not having further comments from the CC members, the matter was closed.

8.2. Entourage

Ms SÖRLING introduced to the CC members the Entourage Working Group, which the EC agreed to form, and the rationale behind it. Ms SÖRLING explained the hope that this WG will help to ensure that the voices of the athletes are better heard and asked each of the Continental Presidents to appoint a representative.

Ms SÖRLING confirmed that Jean-Michel SAIVE, NOC President of Belgium, and member of the IOC Athletes Entourage Commission will be leading the WR, and Mr MAEHARA will be the EC member in charge.

Mr RYU added that in his capacity as the Chair of the Athletes Commission of the Olympic Council of Asia, he agrees with the importance of such a Working Group with the aim to better support the athletes.

8.3. World Cups

Ms SÖRLING informed the CC about the letter from the Athletes Commission (**AC**) received by the EC in January and the meeting held in Singapore prior to the EC and CC meetings.

Mr DANTON added that already before the existence of WTT, the World Cup and the World Tour Grand Finals were somehow "cannibalising" each other and the suggestion from the consultancy firms that were assisting the ITTF at that stage suggested the merging of these two properties.

Mr DAINTON reflected on the situation which led to proposition 24 to the 2020 BoD to be defeated but the problem is still there, on how to improve the existing event's structure.

Mr DAINTON commented on the meeting held with Mr PRIMORAC on previous days, and the suggestion to award the World Cup to the winners of the WTT Finals and the possibility to invite the winners of the Continental Cups to Grand Smashes, so the Continental Cups will remain attractive.

The CC noted that a written presentation and proposal will be circulated to the CC and to the Athletes, with the aim to prepare a proposition to the BoD if consensus is found.

Mr IRELAND asked in relation to the Team World Cup, and Ms SÖRLING indicated that the discussions held with the AC were mainly on the Men's and Women's (Singles) Cups.

Further comments from Dr MESHREF, Mr MOURA, and Mr OSHODI were made on whether the World Cups and the WTT Finals should be merged or not, and whether the Continental Cups winners would directly qualify for the WTT Cup Finals or not and it was agreed that further discussion is needed.

9. Next Meetings

Not having any other business, Ms SÖRLING thanked all those in attendance for their participation, particularly Mr VILA for his attendance online at very late hours in the Dominican Republic, as well as Mr LIU, from China and the meeting was adjourned at 13h15 SGT, inviting the CC members to the meeting to be held in Chengdu, China, during the World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in October 2022.

Petra SÖRLING
ITTF President

Date

Raul CALIN
ITTF Secretary General

Date