

CONTINENTAL COUNCIL MEETING

Grand Fourwings Convention Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand
Monday 21st August 2023 – 14h00 to 17h00 ICT

MINUTES

CC members in attendance:

SÖRLING Petra	President
LIU Guoliang	Deputy President
AL-MOHANNADI Khalil	Senior Executive Vice-President, ATTU President
MAEHARA Masahiro	Executive Vice-President
MESHREF Alaa	Executive Vice-President
OSHODI Wahid	Executive Vice-President
SYMONS Graham	Executive Vice-President
AZEVEDO Alaor	Executive Vice-President
RYU Seung-Min	IOC Member
LIU Shiwen	Athlete's Commission Co-Chair
MOURA Pedro	ETTU Acting President
EL-SALHY Khaled	ATTF President
MOORE Anthony	ITTF-Oceania President
VILA Juan (via Zoom ®)	ITTF Americas President

Staff in attendance:

DAINTON Steve	ITTF Group CEO
CALIN Raul	ITTF Secretary General
BESSAH Mounir	ITTF Deputy Secretary General
ANDERSSON Mikael	ITTF Sports Director

Apologies:

NATRAN Roland	Executive Vice-President – Finance
ACHANTA Sharath Kamal	Athlete's Commission Co-Chair

1. Welcome from the ITTF President

Ms Petra SÖRLING welcomed the Continental Council ("CC") to Bangkok, Thailand, and expressed her pleasure to see nearly all continental presidents in-person for the CC meeting, ITTF Summit and AGM, with the exception of Mr Juan VILA who was unable to attend in person. Ms SÖRLING hoped for the CC meeting to be as fruitful as the Executive Board ("EB") meeting just concluded two hours earlier.

2. Welcome from the EB member in charge of the Continental Council

Mr Khalil AL-MOHANNADI was invited to address the CC. He echoed Ms SÖRLING's opening address, hoping that the CC could have a efficient and fruitful meeting that could be conducted swiftly, and that all members of the EB along with the Continental Presidents can look to work together effectively to support the sport of table tennis.

Ms SÖRLING deferred to Mr Mounir BESSAH Mounir for some information on the ITTF Summit.

The CC noted the report of Mr BESSAH, who commended the efforts made by the host, the Table Tennis Association of Thailand (“**TTAT**”) to help with the preparation for the Summit. Mr BESSAH indicated that a total of 86 Associations shall be attending the Summit in-person; with 24 from Africa, 4 from the Americas, 33 from Asia, 23 from Europe, and 2 from Oceania.

Mr BESSAH indicated that following a survey taken after the ITTF Summit in Jordan, Amman last year, the ITTF Summit 2023 would include additional plenary sessions and workshop sessions for members to discuss in small groups topics such as the future of the World Table Tennis Championships (WTTTC), World Table Tennis (WTT), and Governance. Mr BESSAH drew attention to the new Members Portal dedicated to the Summit which would be updated daily instead of sending daily emails to the Members, any and all information related to the Summit would be updated through this portal. Mr BESSAH hoped that the revised format of the Summit to better serve the Members, referring also to the presence of external speakers that will enhance the quality of the Summit.

Ms SÖRLING thanked the team and TTAT for their hard work and effort to prepare for the Summit and hoped for more opportunities to speak with member associations during the Summit. Ms SÖRLING additionally welcomed any and all feedback on the Summit for the ITTF to review and improve upon.

3. Minutes of the previous Continental Council meeting

3.1. Approval of the Minutes from the last meeting

Ms SÖRLING opened the floor to feedback on the Minutes of the Meeting of the CC held on Saturday 27th May 2023, which had been circulated to all prior to this meeting.

The CC members had no comments on the Minutes.

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The Continental Council approved the Minutes of the CC Meeting held in Durban, South Africa, on 27th May 2023.

3.2. Business arising from the Minutes

Ms SÖRLING identified two items from previous meetings that have yet to be addressed by the ITTF: (i) A Working Group (WG) for Master Continental Agreements (MCA): Ms SÖRLING noted that Mr Steve DAINTON together with the EB is working on structural changes within the staff of the ITTF Group in an effort to make the ITTF operations more efficient and better in all areas, which include the services to Member Associations in cooperation with the Continental Federations. Due to these structural changes, this WG has been put on hold, but Ms SÖRLING wished to emphasise that this item was not forgotten. The second item arising from previous Meetings is (ii) Qualification Pathway for WTTTC Busan, but this is already included in this agenda, and therefore will be dealt with later in this meeting.

Ms SÖRLING opened the floor to any additional queries.

Mr Pedro MOURA asked in relation to Mr Juan VILA's report during the previous CC meeting in Durban, where Mr VILA had spoken of interference in continental elections. Mr MOURA queried whether the ITTF would be conducting an investigation on this matter and if the CC should report this to the Integrity Unit for further action. Mr MOURA opined that this topic is a serious subject that the ITTF would need to resolve.

Mr Wahid OSHODI clarified that if a person feels wronged, this would be for such person to bring up to the Integrity Unit and should not be brought up by the CC on behalf of such person.

There being no other business, item 4 of the agenda was addressed.

4. Continental President Report – Africa

Mr Khaled EL-SALHY presented the report for Africa. It was noted that since the WTTC Finals in Durban, Africa has only had one continental competition, the African Youth Championships, which serves as qualifying event for the World Youth Championships. The CC noted that regional events have been conducted in the pathway to Busan 2024 WTTC Finals as well.

Mr EL-SALHY hoped for these days during the Summit to be able to discuss the MCA implementation for the rest of the year.

5. Continental President Report – Americas

Mr Juan VILA presented the report for the Americas, indicating that since May 2023, the ITTF Americas has been working for the improvement of processes within the Continental Federation of the Americas.

A new Continental Director has been hired, Jorge HERRERA and the CF has completed the regional championships in the senior and youth categories leading to the Continental Championships that will be held in Cuba in September, and that will serve as a qualification tournament for the WTTC Finals in Busan and for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. Furthermore, the ITTF Americas Continental Youth Championships have been successfully completed in Charleston, USA.

To conclude, Mr VILA congratulated El Salvador for the successful organisation of the Central American and Caribbean Games in San Salvador.

6. Continental President Report – Asia

Mr Khalil AL-MOHANNADI presented the report for Asia. It was noted that since the meeting of the CC in Durban, ATTU has conducted several meetings of the Continental Federation. The CC noted that Doha hosted the 27th ATTU Youth Championships and the upcoming Asian Championships and Asian Games in Korea Republic and China, respectively.

To conclude, Mr AL-MOHANNADI hoped to confirm the Asian Cup and potentially the first Asian Club Championships in Asia in the coming weeks.

7. Continental President Report – Europe

Mr Pedro MOURA presented the report for Europe, noting that since the last meeting of the CC, there have been four major table tennis events in Europe: the ETTU Under-13 European Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, the European Games in Krakow, Poland, the European Veterans Championships, in Sandefjord, Norway, and the European Youth Championships in Gliwice, Poland.

Mr MOURA also referred to the implementation of the development programme, highlighting the first mentorship program for match officials and a virtual webinar for virtual table tennis. Last but not least, Mr Moura reported that since May 2023, ETTU has held 5 Executive Board meetings (3 being online and 2 in-person).

8. Continental President Report – Oceania

Mr Anthony MOORE presented the report for Oceania. Mr MOORE mentioned the National Championship held in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Australia and New Zealand, which for Oceania is a milestone after the slow recovery post-COVID-19 in the region.

Mr MOORE indicated that the main challenge for the continent is the engagement with Member Associations, proof of that being that only two members of the Oceania Management Committee are in the Summit in Thailand.

The CC noted, however, that the Pacific Games to be held in Honiara, Solomon Islands, in November are seen as a fantastic opportunity to engage with the Members, as this event is like the Olympic Games for the Pacific Islands.

Mr MOORE highlighted the section of his report on the Commonwealth Games, noting that he had been in contact with Victoria's Tourism and Events Bureau following discussions to host a Grand Smash event in Melbourne.

To conclude, Mr MOORE spoke about the resignation of Table Tennis Australia's CEO, Mr Scott HOUSTON. Mr MOORE wished to acknowledge and commend his enormous contribution to table tennis in Australia during the years he served in the role.

Ms SÖRLING also acknowledged Mr HOUSTON for his hard work and contribution to the ITTF Development Programme for several years.

9. Busan 2024 WTTC Finals

The CC noted that in addition to items 9.1 Qualification Pathway, and 9.2 Playing System, an additional item 9.3 Calendar, has been added.

9.1. Qualification Pathway

The CC noted the progress on the qualification pathway with regional events being completed in most of the continents having them and continental championships planned for September-October.

9.2. Playing System

The CC noted the two options put forward for decision. Mr ANDERSSON expressed that, in his professional view, both propositions are suitable, highlighting the fact that for the first time, the World Team Championships will serve as a qualification for the Olympic Games, adding value to an already very important event, and also being the reason why the playing system is being discussed.

Mr CALIN noted that the ITTF Council will be deciding which of the options is chosen on Wednesday 23rd August, by electronic voting.

9.3. Calendar

Mr ANDERSSON was invited to present before the CC on this item. Mr ANDERSSON noted that the calendar coordination is an extremely important point and thanked the communication with all parties, particularly with Mr DAINTON adding that the calendar for 2024 is more or less confirmed.

The CC noted the importance of aligning the dates of the Continental Championships after the Olympic Games to have a better overall calendar structure, particularly with the return of the World Cups.

10. Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

10.1. Confirmation of ITOs

It was noted that since the meeting of the CC in Duban, the continental federations have confirmed the names of the Continental Representatives in the Jury for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games; therefore, it is for the CC to formally ratify these lists, which are shown in full for completeness.

OLYMPIC GAMES

Jury Chair	IRELAND Graeme (AUS)	M
Jury Deputy Chair	SPORRER Rudolf (AUT)	M
Continental Rep.	Africa – EL-SALHY Khaled (EGY)	M
Continental Rep.	Americas – VILA Juan	M
Continental Rep.	Asia – SALEH Mohd Abdulla	M
Continental Rep.	Europe – AHLERT Heike	F
Continental Rep.	Oceania – MOORE Anthony	M

PARALYMPIC GAMES

Jury Chair	THURY Werner	M
Jury Deputy Chair	WU Sheng Kuang	M
Continental Rep.	Africa – KAJEE Hajera	F
Continental Rep.	Americas – CALLE Paul	M
Continental Rep.	Asia – CHAN Cheong Ki	M
Continental Rep.	Europe – JOZEPSONE Ina	F
Continental Rep.	Oceania – SANDLEY Sarah	F

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[The Continental Council ratified the Continental Representatives for the Jury at the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.](#)

10.2. Paralympic Games Playing System

The CC noted the report from Mr ANDERSSON on the proposed playing system for Paris 2024 based on the experience at the World Para TT Championships Granada 2022 (knock-out system). When considering the Paralympic Games, Mr ANDERSSON believed the feedback from Granada to be sufficiently positive, with the quality of matches being even better. It has been decided to

move on with the same knockout system. One major improvement has been improving the seeding principles for the knockout system to protect ranked players.

The CC noted this will be also decided by the ITTF Council on 23rd August.

Ms SÖRLING thanked Mr ANDERSSON for his contributions to the meeting.

Ms SÖRLING wished to take the opportunity for Mr RYU Seung-Min to present an update to his CC colleagues on the WTTC Busan preparations.

Mr RYU expressed that the WTTC Busan 2024 would be a great opportunity to show Korea's passion. The CC noted that despite the cancellation of Busan 2020, KTTA never gave up, and thanks to the support of the CC and Member Associations, there are now only six months to the event.

Mr RYU indicated that the KTTA have found a presenting partner for the WTTC, BNK Busan Bank, for which a signing ceremony is scheduled for the 21 of September in Busan.

The CC also noted that celebrities in Korea are participating in promotional videos and songs and referred to the last inspection by Mr BESSAH held in July, indicating that he was pleased with the preparations so far.

11. Master continental agreements

Mr DAINTON was invited to provide more information on this item.

Mr DAINTON echoed Ms SÖRLING's opening remarks on the deep restructuring of the staff within the ITTF Group, which was not only just with the ITTF staff but also on WTT, and the changes that are needed there at the moment to recalibrate and to get the ITTF moving back on track following the pandemic. Mr DAINTON noted that this project, therefore, would affect the management of the institutional relationship with Member Associations and that these pieces would be worked on together with Mr CALIN, with him taking more responsibility for the management of those relationships going forward. Once this structure has been put in place, the next phase would be to set up the working group for the MCA, which would then include more engagement with the CC.

Mr EL-SALHY highlighted that ITTF-Africa has been working according to the figures allocated at the beginning of the year and that a new event, the African Para TT Championships, was added, to be held in Egypt, in September, serving as qualification for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. Mr EL-SALHY showed his concern that not having a specific budget allocated for this event in the annual budget would affect the organisation. Mr EL-SALHY expressed his desire to find a way to discuss receiving additional funding from the ITTF for this Para event.

Ms SÖRLING acknowledged Mr EL-SALHY's comment and proposed to meet with Dr AZEVEDO and Mr EL-SALHY on this matter while at the Summit.

Dr AZEVEDO highlighted that Africa is the continent with the least participation in Para events; therefore, any support in this area is appreciated.

Mr MOORE acknowledged that the ITTF Group restructure is a pragmatic approach, but highlighted his concern that there is still no clarity with 2023 funding, despite it being already August. Mr MOORE reported that Mr BESSAH was invited a meeting with the ITTF-Oceania Management Committee (MC), where the matters were discussed, and reported that the MCA constitutes 95% of the continental federation's funding for operations, therefore being absolutely critical to operations.

Mr MOORE continued indicating that the lack of clarity with respect to governance funding, has made the ITTF-Oceania MC fearful of the future of the organisation. Mr MOORE noted that this is the third meeting where he has brought up this issue, alerting that ITTF-Oceania is close to becoming a "hands on" MC running the business as he feels the ITTF-Oceania CEO will resign soon.

To conclude, and again acknowledging the pragmatic approach of the restructure, Mr MOORE emphasised that the frustration of ITTF-Oceania MC is experiencing is at an all time high and trust in the ITTF to get this right is at an all time low.

Ms SÖRLING acknowledged Mr MOORE's comments and agreed that budgets should be available before year's end for the next exercise, that clarity on funding is critical for any organisation's planning, and indicated that although there is no solution right now, the ITTF shall look at how things can be done better, and hoped that a solution is found for the future.

Mr DAINTON echoed the comments from Ms SÖRLING. He acknowledged Mr MOORE's comments, noting that actions would need to be taken, highlighting the significant changes being made to the structure to address several issues to improve ITTF effectiveness and efficiency.

Mr MOURA addressed the CC and raised his concern over development funding, indicating that following the budget allocation for 2022, activities were planned and the ETTU started implementing activities. However, in September 2022, the ETTU was informed of cuts for that year, what led to stressing end of year adjustments. Mr MOURA understood from meetings with the ITTF leadership that the funding for 2023 was the same as originally planned for 2022, and therefore going full speed with activities, however, he prefers to raise the topic in this meeting to avoid having the same problems of reductions as faced in September 2022. Mr MOURA expressed his hope that the discussions in Durban CC Meeting would remain to be true.

Mr DAINTON acknowledged Mr MOURA's comments and noted that the EB meeting had brought up this topic of reductions that the ITTF must do to handle its finances. Mr DAINTON noted that the ITTF EB has said in no uncertain terms that for development in the MCAs, there will not be any reductions. Instead, the ITTF shall be managing its finances with reductions in other areas.

Ms SÖRLING additionally noted that reductions are a necessity now as the ITTF is in a tough period of time and the number of events are not as many, however, the area of development

will be protected. Ms SÖRLING requested the help of the CC members to communicate this to stakeholders.

There being no other comments, the CC moved on to item number 12.

12. Any other business

Ms SÖRLING invited members of the CC to address any concerns, queries, or issues before the AGM.

12.1. IOC Development Funding

Mr RYU noted that the ITTF has 227 Member Associations, making it one of the largest communication groups, more than the IOC, asking if the ITTF makes use of any Olympic Solidary (OS) funds and enquired whether the ITTF could ask for more OS funds for further projects.

Mr CALIN indicated that the ITTF receives yearly USD70,000 from the OS department of the IOC for development activities. In addition to that, the ITTF development department encourages MAs to apply for "DNSS" (Developing National Sport Structure) courses to OS. Furthermore, there are athletes scholarships for players hoping to qualify for the Olympic Games and Youth Olympic Games which are coordinated by Ms CEHOVIN, Mr COSTANTINI and Mr ANDERSSON. Mr CALIN indicated that based on success rates, the IOC makes reviews which determine the potential scholarships for the next OG / YOG cycles. It was agreed to ask the Development Department to provide more information on this matter.

12.2. World Cups

Mr DAINTON recalled the resolution by the Swedish Table Tennis Association in 2021 for a World Mixed Championships, adding that since then, considerations have been made on whether the ITTF World Team Cup could become the World Mixed Team Cup. Mr DAINTON expressed hope to make a trial event this year and then formalise it in 2024. Furthermore, Mr DAINTON indicated that the World (Singles) Cups will be back in 2024, giving the opportunity to re-connect them with the Continental Cups, as in the past.

12.3. Propositions for the ITTF Council

Mr DAINTON noted the proposition to the ITTF Council to increase the number of teams for the WTTC from 2026 onwards from 40 to 64, reminding that the bid for the WTTC 2026 was opened on the basis for 40 teams. While the bidders for the WTTC 2026 have expressed positively that they would be able to accommodate an increase in the number of teams, the EB is concerned that this would then lead to a request for further financial contribution from the ITTF, which the ITTF might not be ready for. Mr DAINTON reiterated that it is not that the ITTF does not want to increase the number of teams, but hoped for the CC and the Member Associations making that proposition to support that this increase would commence from the WTTC in 2028 instead, to give the ITTF a better leeway for the process and preparation and for future bidders to be aware that they shall be bidding on the basis of 64 teams beforehand.

Mr LIU Guoliang addressed the CC noting that following the reports given, he had a better understanding to what each continental federation is doing globally to promote the sport as well as the difficulties and challenges faced by them. Mr LIU expressed that it was heartening to

know that the CC can sit to plan and contribute to the sport together, and further expressed that whether in his capacity as deputy president of the ITTF, or president of the CTTA, he is ready and willing to support and help the Continental Federations as much as he can. Mr LIU looked forward to more interaction over the next few days at the Summit.

Mr AL-MOHANNADI addressed the CC noting that for the World Youth Championships 2025, two strong bids have been received from Romania and Bahrain. Mr AL-MOHANNADI noted that this would be voted during the ITTF Council meeting, and expressed hope that a solution could be found for both Romania and Bahrain to host the World Youth Championships in 2025 and 2026.

Mr CALIN suggested that the Continental Presidents could suggest at the ITTF Council to allocate 2025 to either Romania or Bahrain, and make a motion from the floor for the AGM to allocate 2026 to the other bidder. Mr CALIN indicated that the chapter 4 of the ITTF Statutes state that the ITTF has to inform six months in advance about the opening of the bids, however, this chapter 4 is superseded by the chapter 1, the Constitution and the Constitution allows the AGM, as the sovereign body, to take such decision.

Mr MAEHARA Masahiro referred to the video reply system, which is regularly used in badminton, hoping that in the future table tennis could adopt a similar system in events such as the World Championships and the Olympic Games.

Mr MOURA acknowledged the concern and suggestion raised by Mr DAINTON earlier in the meeting to delay the expansion of the number of teams at the WTTC, and expressed his support.

In relation to World Ranking (WR), Mr MOURA referred to an email he sent recently on this issue expressing his concern about the upcoming expiration of the points from the European Championships, which would disadvantage players from the continents that have split the teams and the individual championships. Mr MOURA asked if the ITTF could find a way to extend the validity of the points and the events, and alternatively, the ETTU could consider in the future to return to the model of full Championships (Teams and Individuals), what would make the event more expensive and also will add further calendar constraints.

Mr EL-SALHY Mr EL-SALHY recalled that there was a discussion for the World Cup to be started from 2023, and not from 2024, and expressed his concern that such delay could be perceived negatively by the players, who have been playing in the Continental Cups hoping for the World Cups to return. As such, Mr EL-SALHY suggested that the return of the World Cups should not be delayed for another year and a solution should be ideally found to host the event this year.

In relation to the WTTC 2026, Mr EL-SALHY acknowledged Mr DAINTON's concerns, but wished to provide perspective from his Continental Federation, mentioning that Africa has some countries that do not receive government funding if they don't play the WTTC and, therefore, he hoped for this change to be implemented in three years time, as the feedback from both ENG and THA has been -in principle- positive.

Mr DAINTON acknowledged Mr EL-SALHY's comments, noting that his main concern is that if the decision to increase the number of teams for WTTC 2026 is made, the successful bidder will probably ask for more funding. Mr DAINTON also reflected that the discussions in today's

meeting thus far have been about how the ITTF can increase funding, particularly for MCAs and in development. Still, if this funding would have to be moved into the WTTC 2026, there would be less possibilities to help in such other areas.

Ms SÖRLING acknowledged Mr EL-SALHY's comments and Mr DAINTON's feedback and expressed that even though the ITTF would love for everyone to compete in the WTTC, at the end of the day, it is a question of prioritisation within the available resources.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 15h35.

13. Next Meeting

Petra SÖRLING
ITTF President

Date

Raul CALIN
ITTF Secretary General

Date