



Torino, 20 February 2025

Subject: Notification of ethical concerns and corrective action required

Dear Mr Smitz,

On behalf of the Nomination Committee, I thank you for meeting with us on 18 February 2025 and following up on some items concerning your candidature as IFSC President. I am writing to you to formally communicate the outcome of our deliberations regarding ethical concerns raised related to your candidature for the IFSC Presidential position.

First and foremost, allow me to establish the legal context in which we operate:

- Pursuant to article 10.10.1.2 of the IFSC Statutes: For each election, a Nomination Committee shall be established ad hoc to oversee the electoral process, in accordance with the relevant regulations approved by the General Assembly.

Furthermore:

- Article 3.3.1 of the Electoral Regulations approved by the General Assembly tasks the Nomination Committee with 'securing a due and fair electoral process'.
- Article 3.3.2 of the Electoral Regulations approved by the General Assembly empowers the Nomination Committee 'to decide on all aspects related to electoral process, unless otherwise provided by the Statutes and the Electoral Regulations'.

As discussed during our meeting, there are three (3) items of ethical concern that have been noted by the Nomination Committee that need, as a minimum, corrective action on your side. Henceforth, you will be referred to as 'the Candidate'.

1. Background

1.1. Staff Neutrality, 1

- 1.1.1. The Nomination Committee is aware that in early January 2025, the Candidate approached members of IFSC staff for a conversation aimed at clarifying certain aspects of his presidency, in case of election.
- 1.1.2. The General Director initially agreed to talk as the conversation was not about the campaign but rather about the intentions of standing for the presidency. Following the content of the email shared with other staff [Ref. *IFSC elections - small exchange*], the General Director advised the Candidate to refrain from making such contact and respect the neutrality of the staff as per Article 2.3.6 of the Electoral Regulations, which the Candidate complied with. The matter was reported to the Executive Board for their information at their meeting on 5 February 2025.
- 1.1.3. In line with Article 3.3.1 cited above, ensuring the neutrality of IFSC staff is fundamental to upholding the integrity of the election process.

1.2. Staff Neutrality, 2 – Use of picture including IFSC staff (General Director Piero Rebaudengo) and athletes

- 1.2.1. The electoral manifesto shared as part of the Candidate's nomination dossier includes an image featuring IFSC General Director Piero Rebaudengo without prior authorisation. The use of a staff member's image in an electoral campaign raises concerns about implied endorsements, putting the staff member in question in a position of embarrassment, and is fundamentally contrary to the requirement for neutrality already mentioned above.



- 1.2.2. Moreover, since the issue of staff neutrality was already communicated to the Candidate via email on 20 January 2025, and in any case on 5 February 2025 in the context of the Executive Board meeting, the Nomination Committee considers that there was ample time to amend the manifesto and remove the picture before submitting the nomination on 11 February 2025.
- 1.2.3. Despite this, no such correction was made, reinforcing the Nomination Committee's concern regarding compliance with and understanding of ethical standards.
- 1.2.4. In addition, the inclusion of athletes' pictures in the manifesto is also of concern, as it may give the impression of implicit endorsements, which are to be avoided in the context of an election.

1.3. Use of quote from IOC President Thomas Bach

- 1.3.1. On 11 February 2025, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) through its Deputy Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer directly expressed concern regarding the use of a statement from IOC President Thomas Bach in the Candidate's campaign material. This quote was published by the Candidate on social media, disseminated to the Executive Board and IFSC Member Federations, and remains in the campaign video submitted with the nomination dossier. Once again, such reference generates a misleading perception of endorsement by the IOC, notably by the IOC President, which is incompatible with ethical standards and fair campaigning.
- 1.3.2. Under the IFSC Eligibility Criteria approved by the General Assembly, candidates shall not have past sanctions or pending inquiries involving the violation of, among others, the Olympic Charter and IOC Code of Ethics.
- 1.3.3. To the Nomination Committee's knowledge, there was immediate response to the IOC informing that corrective action would be taken according to their request.
- 1.3.4. To this date, there is no record of follow up with the IOC in verifying if the corrective action taken is deemed satisfactory, and there is no record that all the parties who received such campaign material quoting the IOC President were informed of this issue and, ultimately, there has been no public apology in relation to the matter.

Finally, it is noted that the Candidate has already provided an edited version of the electoral video claiming *force majeure* for its use, and in the meeting held on 18 February 2025, the Candidate expressed willingness to amend the manifesto and remove the picture featuring the General Director and athletes.

2. Conclusions

In light of the above, the Nomination Committee concludes that:

- 2.1. The matter of staff neutrality has not been complied with, and the Candidate has put the General Director in an awkward position by associating him with his campaign.
- 2.2. As per the video guidelines, approved by the Executive Board, communicated on 13 December 2024 at the opening of candidatures, edited videos are not permitted.
- 2.3. The circumstances do not constitute *force majeure* to allow for any exception, be it the use of the edited video or corrective action on the manifesto after the cut-off date (11 February 2025, 23:59 CET).

For the above reasons, the Nomination Committee determines as follows:

- 2.4. The electoral manifesto of the Candidate shall not be published. The IFSC office will be instructed not to circulate the manifesto to the IFSC Member Federations with the electoral material. Any attempt, direct or indirect, to disseminate this manifesto to any party constitutes grounds for immediate disqualification from the IFSC General Elections. [Ref. *Tijl Smitz IFSC elections 2025 manifesto*].
- 2.5. The campaign video (edited and unedited) submitted with the nomination dossier shall not be published. The IFSC office will be instructed not to circulate either of the videos to the IFSC Member Federations with the electoral material. Any attempt, direct or indirect, to disseminate either video to any party constitutes grounds for immediate disqualification from the IFSC General Elections. [Ref. *Tijl Smitz - campagnevideo HD.mp4*, containing the IOC President quote; and the edited version Ref. *Tijl v2_1 captions.mp4*]



The Nomination Committee further notes that:

- 2.6. While the Candidate subsequently removed the references to the IOC President quote from social media, materials containing the quote have been previously disseminated to the Executive Board as well as to IFSC Member Federations.
- 2.7. Such dissemination caused a misleading perception and created an unfair advantage vis-à-vis other candidates.
- 2.8. The intervention of the IOC is, per se, a significant damage to the image and reputation of the IFSC as an organisation.
- 2.9. The above facts cannot be undone, and therefore the damage to the IFSC and the unfair advantage to other candidates remains.

3. Required Action

- 3.1. In view of the foregoing, the Nomination Committee requests the Candidate to take the following steps:
 - 3.1.1. The Candidate shall send a written statement of apology to the General Director, with a copy of the statement to be sent to the Executive Board for their knowledge.
 - 3.1.2. The Candidate shall publish a public written statement of apology to the IOC and to the IFSC on social media (LinkedIn, Instagram, as a minimum) acknowledging the improper use of a statement from the IOC President.
 - 3.1.3. The Candidate shall send a written communication to all IFSC Member Federations and other bodies who received the announcement of the Candidate's presidential candidature on 17 December 2024, acknowledging the improper use of a statement from the IOC President and damage caused.
 - 3.1.4. The Candidate shall send a written follow up message to the IOC Deputy Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer informing him of the action taken and verifying his satisfaction with it.
 - 3.1.5. The Candidate shall inform the IFSC office and the Nomination Committee of all actions taken in accordance with items 3.1.1 to 3.1.4 above; where appropriate, the Candidate shall copy them in all correspondences for the record.
- 3.2. The Candidate shall complete all corrective action by and no later than **12:00h noon CET (midday) on Thursday 27 February 2025**.
- 3.3. Following this cut-off time, the Nomination Committee will review the action taken and verify their compliance with the Committee's instructions.
- 3.4. In the event that the Nomination Committee is not sufficiently satisfied by the action taken, disqualification of the Candidate from the IFSC General Elections remains reserved.
- 3.5. Moreover, the Nomination Committee will include the present matter in its final report to the Executive Board and National Federations.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation in this matter.
Should you need any clarification please do let us know in a timely manner.

Kind regards,

Dagmawit Girmay Berhane
Chair of the Nomination Committee