



***MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
HELD IN
OKLAHOMA, USA
25 July 2026***

INTERNATIONAL CANOE FEDERATION (ICF)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Overview

This was the fifth meeting of the ICF Board of Directors in 2026, held in person on 25 July 2026. A quorum was formed in line with the ICF Statutes, with 30 Board members.

Agenda

1. Introduction and Welcome
2. President's Information
3. Board of Directors Members' Information
4. Congress Update
5. Integrity Unit & Adjudication Panel nomination
6. Term of Reference for Integrity Unit & Adjudication Panel
7. Updated Code of Ethics
8. Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport – Update
9. RUS & BLR situation
10. U.N. & E.U. Sport Office opportunity
11. Other Business
 - Paddle Worldwide Relaunch Timeline & Implementation
12. Closing Remarks



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Participants:

Thomas Konietzko	TK	President	GER
Richard Pettit	RP	Secretary General	GBR
Lluís Rabaneda i Caselles	LRC	Vice President	ESP
Jean Zoungrana	JZ	Paddle Europe President	FRA
Toshi Furuya	TF	Canoe Sprint Committee Chair	JPN
Sebastian Brendel	SB	Athlete Committee Chair	RSA
Ruud Heijsselaar	RH	Canoe Marathon Committee Chair	NED
Greg Smale	GS	Canoe Polo Committee Chair	GBR
Terry Best	TBE	Canoe Freestyle Committee Chair	GBR
Noémi Horváth	NH	SUP Committee Chair	HUN
Jane Gibson	JG	Medical and Anti-Doping Committee Chair	GBR
Li Xin	LX	Treasurer	CHN
Marian Sârbu	MS	Canoe Ocean Racing Committee Chair	BEL
Richard Fox	RF	Canoe Slalom Committee Chair	AUS
*Dr. Luk Wai-Hung	LWH	Dragon Boat Commission Chair	HKG
Peter Karai	PK	Continental Representative - EUR	HUN
Manuela Gawehn	MG	Wildwater Canoeing Committee Chair	GER
Ahmed Mahamoud Abdoukader	AMA	Continental Representative - AFR	DJI
Maree Burnett	MB	Oceania Canoe Association President	NZL
Moirá Aston	MA	Continental Representative - EUR	IRL
Budiman Setiawan	BS	Continental Representative - ASI	INA
John Edwards	JE	Paracanoe Committee Chair	CAN
João Manuel Da Costa Alegre Afonso	JDC	Confederation of African Canoeing President	STP
Prashant Kushwaha	PK	Asian Canoe Confederation President	THA
Olubunmi Ola Oluode	OO	Continental Representative - AFR	NGR
Sebastian Gomez	SG	Pan American Canoe Federation President	URG
Shao Yaping	SY	Continental Representative - ASI	CHN
Cecilia Farias	CF	Vice President	ARG
Andrej Jelenc	AJ	Continental Representative - EUR	SLO
Martha Hernandez Sanches	MHS	Continental Representative - PAM	MEX

Excused:

Luciano Buonfiglio	LB	Vice President	ITA
Victor G. Ruiz	VR	Continental Representative - PAM	PUR

*ICF Board member non-voting



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1. Introduction and Welcome

- TK, Suzanne Britt (SB), ACA President, and Senator Mark Mann welcomed the BoD to the Oklahoma State Senate. TK highlighted the significance of the meeting as the final BoD meeting before the federation's transition to Paddle Worldwide.
- The strong partnership between the ICF, the ACA and Oklahoma City was acknowledged, with Riversport Oklahoma recognised as a model for paddlesport venue development and the future canoe slalom venue for LA28.
- SB emphasised the shared values of adaptation, innovation and long-term development across the ACA, Oklahoma City and the ICF.
- TK outlined the agenda, noting that the primary focus of the meeting would be preparations for the upcoming Congress. LRC and RF, jury members and competition officials, were excused to fulfil competition duties, online participants, JDC, MG, BS, and OO were welcomed.
- A quorum was confirmed in accordance with the ICF Statutes.

2. President's Information

IOC and Olympic Programme Developments

- TK updated the Board on the IOC's *Fit for Future* strategy and the increasing evaluation of Olympic disciplines.
- TK noted that canoe sprint and canoe slalom continue to be monitored as part of this process and that the IOC is expected to announce a list of flagged disciplines in the coming weeks.

Brisbane 2032 Preparations

- TK provided an update on ongoing discussions regarding the Brisbane 2032 venues, including Redlands for slalom and Rockhampton for sprint.
- Key stakeholders from Brisbane 2032 and the Australian Olympic movement have reaffirmed their support for maintaining both canoe sprint and canoe slalom within the Olympic programme.

Venue Development Strategy

- TK informed the BoD of ongoing efforts to promote the long-term sustainability and legacy of paddlesport venues, including engagement with potential future Olympic hosts and investment in venue development projects in India and the Middle East.
- TK outlined that the ICF Executive Committee had approved a proposal to invest in a communication and PR strategy to be implemented to further strengthen the global image of canoe slalom and sprint and showcase the long-term value and sustainability of



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paddlesport venues.

Bulgarian Canoe Federation

- TK briefed the BoD on allegations concerning the Bulgarian Canoe Federation.
- Confirmed that the Bulgarian NOC had concluded its investigation with no grounds identified that would affect future ICF events in Bulgaria.

Olympic Sprint Programme

- TK updated the BoD on recent correspondence relating to the proposed Olympic Sprint programme changes and confirmed that discussions with the IOC would continue as the Olympic programme review process progresses. (Press release following previous board decision <https://www.canoeicf.com/news/icf-board-sets-strategic-direction-future-olympic-canoe-sprint>)
- The ICF will proceed with its application to introduce a long-distance event to the Olympic programme, with final event decisions dependent on the outcome of the IOC discipline review.

3. Board of Directors Members' Information

Athletes' Committee Update

- SB reported on athlete feedback from recent competitions, including the implementation of the new qualification system, para sport accessibility, competition operations and preparations for LA28.

Olympic Movement and Venue Development

- JDC highlighted the IOC's increasing focus on cost, universality and sustainability and asked how the ICF was preparing to respond to these priorities.
- RF noted that future venue strategies could include greater consideration of natural venues as a sustainable alternative to artificial courses.

Asian Development Update

- PK highlighted the continued growth of paddlesports in Asia and encouraged greater allocation of major events, technical opportunities and development programmes across the continent.

Broadcast and Media Feedback

- GS welcomed the improvements made to broadcasting, athlete interviews and digital content, noting that the sport is being presented in a more engaging and accessible way for wider audiences.

4. Congress Update

RP provided an overview of registered federations, voting eligibility and Congress arrangements.

Registered Federations and Voting Eligibility

- A total of 98 federations were registered for Congress, with 32 attending in person and 66 online.
- The Verification Commission reviewed several outstanding cases, including federations with payment issues or late registrations.
- Cash-paying federations with established payment records, as well as Spain and Seychelles, were accepted, while a late application from Sri Lanka was rejected.

Decision: The BoD endorsed the Verification Commission's authority to resolve pending cases and approved the revised Congress agenda, placing voting items in the morning sessions to maximise participation from online federations across different time zones.

Governance Reform – Organisational Review

TK presented the proposed governance reforms and the approach for presenting the BoD structure proposals to Congress.

- Continental Associations feedback indicated national federations would not support Option 2 as originally drafted. There is a wish to keep the five Continental Association Presidents plus the addition of regional representatives (complete tally 4 Europe, 3 Asia, 3 Africa, 3 Americas and 2 Oceania), this would maintain continental representation at the same level as in today's Board of Directors.
- Following discussion, and to respect the process, it was agreed that such a change would need to come from the floor during the Congress. It was emphasised that the proposal was intended to preserve the wider governance reforms, including the Integrity Unit, Sports Board, Athletes' Board and enhanced athlete representation, while securing the two-thirds majority required for approval at Congress.
- RP emphasised that significant work had been invested in the governance review over the preceding 19 months and warned that failure to pass the reforms would delay important governance improvements, including the Integrity Unit and enhanced athlete representation.

5. Integrity Unit & Adjudication Panel Nominations

RP presented the proposed nominations for the Integrity Unit and Adjudication Panel.

- The proposed Integrity Unit comprises Mike Chambers (Chair), Mario Santos and Brianna Quinn.
- The proposed Adjudication Panel consists of experienced sports law professionals who have previously worked with the ICF.



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Board Comments

- GS noted that appointment terms should be staggered to ensure continuity within the Integrity Unit.

Decision: The BoD unanimously endorsed both nominations, subject to Congress approval of the governance reforms.

6. Terms of Reference for Integrity Unit & Adjudication Panel

RP presented the provisional Terms of Reference for both the Integrity Unit and Adjudication Panel.

Board Comments

- JB requested clarification regarding appeal procedures and the relationship between the Adjudication Panel and CAS appeal rights.

Decision: The BoD unanimously approved the provisional Terms of Reference.

7. Updated Code of Ethics

RP presented an updated Code of Ethics to support the implementation of the new governance structure.

Board Comments

- GS sought clarification regarding signature requirements and the consequences of non-compliance with the Code of Ethics.
- JG requested clarity on the right of appeal under the Adjudication Panel.
- CF recommended ensuring that signed Code of Ethics declarations are properly recorded and visible.
- GS questioned whether the proposed Integrity Unit included sufficient safeguarding expertise.
- TK confirmed all points will be addressed in the refined terms of reference.

Decision: The BoD unanimously approved the updated Code of Ethics.

8. Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport – Update

JG presented and discussed the new policy for screening athletes in the female category for LA28 and beyond, covering timelines, procedures, responsibilities and support for national federations.

Proposed timelines

- **Olympic disciplines:** Mandatory for all athletes to be screened by 1 January 2028.
- **Non-Olympic disciplines:** Mandatory at World Championships from 1 January 2030.
- National federations will arrange screening and identify relevant athletes, while athletes will submit results to the ICF for eligibility verification.
- The ICF will explore support measures, including screening opportunities at selected events and assistance for federations facing legal or logistical barriers.
- The policy will be supported by education, counselling and safeguarding measures, including multilingual guidance materials.
- Junior and U23 athletes are included within the policy framework, with additional safeguarding provisions for minors.

Board Comments

- GS welcomed the proposed timeline and asked whether the screening requirements would apply to U21 and younger athletes, noting the importance of informing athletes in advance that the policy will be introduced.
- JE asked whether the IOC had now provided a clearer implementation framework and sought clarification on the application of the policy across different age categories, including juniors and U23 athletes.

Decision: The Board endorsed both deadlines: 1 January 2028 (Olympic) and 1 January 2030 (non-Olympic).

9. RUS & BLR situation

TK and RP presented a revised policy on the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes, aligned with recent IOC recommendations and introducing a flexible framework for event organisers.

- The current neutrality policy will remain in force for all 2026 competitions.
- From 1 January 2027, all sanctions will be lifted and hosts will no longer be permitted to refuse the participation of neutral athletes.
- The change follows IOC guidance and supports the ICF's position as part of the Olympic Movement.
- Event organisers will be able to choose between three participation models: full neutrality (no national symbols, flag or anthem), partial neutrality (national clothing and boat markings permitted, but no flag or anthem on venue), or unrestricted participation.
- All events awarded from 1 January 2027 onwards must allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete.

Board Comments

- PK raised concerns that visa restrictions could prevent Russian athletes from earning qualification points for LA28 despite the revised policy.
- TK clarified that athlete participation ultimately depends on national visa decisions, which remain outside the ICF's control. He also noted that, with the exception of Prague, hosts have confirmed their willingness to accept Russian athletes.
- RP confirmed that the AIN A and B designation ensures continuity of qualification points and underlined that the ICF had a proven track record of ensuring AIN athletes can complete.

Decision: The BoD approved the revised policy aligning with IOC recommendations to lift all sanctions from 1 January 2027.

10. U.N. & E.U. Sport Office opportunity

LRC reported on efforts to diversify ICF development funding beyond the European Union and to identify additional funding opportunities for projects outside Europe.

Erasmus Plus Applications

- Seven Erasmus Plus project applications were submitted for the 2026 season, five ICF-led and two as a partner organisation, building on one successful project approved in 2025.
- Results are expected by the end of August. The ICF is also developing a project pipeline to reuse and adapt successful project frameworks for future funding opportunities.

Lobbying and Funding Diversification

- The ICF has engaged with the European Olympic Committee's Brussels office to identify funding sources beyond Erasmus Plus and the European Union.
- The objective is to expand development support to regions outside Europe and reduce long-term reliance on a single funding source.
- The Brussels office will also help the ICF monitor upcoming funding calls, build partnerships with other organisations and improve access to international development programmes.
- Existing project concepts will be retained and adapted for future funding applications as new opportunities arise.

11. Other Business

Paddle Worldwide Relaunch Timeline & Implementation

RP provided an update on the implementation of the Paddle Worldwide relaunch, outlining the transition from the International Canoe Federation and the steps required to support the rollout of the new identity.

- The relaunch will be implemented progressively across communications, governance and



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operational activities to ensure a smooth transition and consistency across the organisation.

- The relaunch aims to strengthen the global positioning of Paddle Worldwide, better reflect the diversity of paddle sports and support future growth and development opportunities.

12. Closing Remarks

TK thanked BoD members for their contributions and participation in the meeting and wished them a successful Congress.