



# WORLD KARATE FEDERATION

Recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)  
Member of the General Association  
of International Sports Federations (GAISF) and  
the International World Games Association (IWGA)

## Olympic Congress in Copenhagen, 3-5 October 2009

### OPEN LETTER TO THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

#### The Olympic Programme

**By Antonio Espinós, President of the World Karate Federation**

Following the decision regarding the two sports selected by the IOC EB on August 13<sup>th</sup> in Berlin, the Olympic Program faces in Copenhagen its first serious opportunity for change in 16 years. However, even if such change were ratified they would remain insignificant and unbalanced considering the rapid rate at which society is currently evolving.

Although some may not agree with some of the considerations included here, we trust that they will be accepted in the spirit, in which they are offered; that is positively, constructively and with the sole intention of contributing to the necessary evolution and modernization of our structures. In this regard, **the next Olympic Congress** in Copenhagen will provide a key opportunity to launch ideas and proposals that can serve the IOC in terms of accelerating the processes of change within the Olympic Programme.

To overlook the possibility that the overruling consideration for acceptance in Berlin was income potential from sponsors and television rights rather than social benefits for youth and athletes associated with National Federations that depend on inclusion into the Olympic Program for public funding is difficult. To reflect on the apparent values of the Olympic Movement versus the actual priorities of its leadership tends to cause confusion and promote disillusionment with the Olympic ideal.

Nevertheless, during the first round of voting in Berlin and after Rugby 7s was selected as the first sport, Karate had a clear lead of votes for selection for the second sport. At that moment the outcome clearly showed that Karate would follow Rugby 7s as the second sport, thus maintaining a balance between elitism and popularity in the two new additions to the Olympic Program. Yet a different outcome was announced only a few moments later, which was the same for all candidates other than the two selected.

What precisely happened in Berlin? The rejected IFs must understand their deficiencies and to understand whether or not they will ever have a genuine opportunity to be included in the Programme is imperative.

Further scrutiny of the entire process that concluded in the selection of 2 among 7 candidate sports reveals a less glamorous tale bubbling underneath the initial sensation of the outcome, from which some bitter conclusions can be drawn.

The number of candidates has by far exceeded the number of available slots, and the path towards Olympic inclusion has been lengthy and rather costly. The process has left several demoralized and financially exhausted IFs, which have been forced to decelerate or even paralyze their solidarity programs for years. Furthermore, the perception is that no action that they could have taken along this arduous path would have altered the final outcome.

Having only one slot available for 2013 creates the perception that these IFs, as well as the over 30 other IOC-recognized IFs and the new IFs that expect to gain forthcoming IOC recognition have little or no hope of entering the Olympic Programme.

Yet, this does not mean that nothing can be done. In fact, **only the political determination of the IOC decision-makers** is required to change this situation.



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The present iteration of Rule 46 of the Olympic Charter after it was modified by the 2007 Guatemala IOC Session has proven irrelevant. In recognition of this, the World Karate Federation **submitted** a paper **at the end of 2008** for the 2009 Copenhagen Olympic Congress, entitled, **“How can the IOC accelerate changes in the Olympic Programme”**. The paper proposed including the additional disposition 2.1.5 in the Bye-laws to Rule 46 of the Olympic Charter that should read as follows:

**“An IF not listed under point 2.1.2, and whose sport is decided by the IOC Session to enter the Olympic Programme will automatically be included in the list of IFs under point 2.1.2.”**

This simple addition of three lines would multiply by at least three the number of **slots available in 2013**, as we assume that Golf and Rugby will be confirmed during the Copenhagen IOC Session. **By 2017, the number of available slots would vary between 5 and 6**, and so on.

We also recommend a review of point 2.1.3 of the Bye-laws to Rule 46 from the perspective of introducing a shortlist or limitation to be decided by the IOC EB of the sports listed in 2.1.2 and not in the core for becoming sport candidates for the Programme.

Rather simple changes could also be the sports core to be voted upon individually and not *en bloc*, as well as a modification to the Olympic Charter that empowers the IOC EB, or the IOC Session upon receiving a proposal from the EB, to add IFs to the list of point 2.1.2 of the Bye-laws to Rule 46 of the Charter based on objective criteria.

Another innovative - and preferred - approach is to consider a Programme with more than 28 sports. The figure of 28 included in point 2.1.4 of the Bye-laws to Rule 46 of the Olympic Charter wrongly assimilates IFs with sports, and is furthermore not the parameter that defines the size of the Games, as that is determined by the numbers of events and of participating athletes.

In conclusion, recent experience can generate several alternatives from the viewpoint of providing a historical push to such an intrinsic part of the Olympic Movement as the Olympic Summer Programme, and the Olympic Congress in Copenhagen could be rather important for helping the IOC to decide which the way to follow is. Universal sports with millions of supporters and many inherent social values that are highly popular among the youth of underdeveloped, developing and developed countries must be given an opportunity to show how they add significant value to the Games.

**Such changes would help to reduce stagnation** and the feeling permeating the non Olympic IFs that the rigidity of the system is what prevents their incorporation to the Olympic Programme irrespective of their merits; these changes would also favour Fair Play and give the IFs the right impression that the IOC supports the concept of “Improve to enter, improve to stay”.

**Antonio Espinós**  
WKF President

Madrid, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2009