

1 May 2018

Dear Board, Council and Committee members and MNAs,

Over the past month, there has been a major debate surrounding the revision and selection process of our events at the 2024 Summer Olympic Games. With the upcoming Board meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to provide some clarification and share with you my personal point of view on this matter.

First, I want to discuss the process. It seems that there are some who question our process and make unsubstantiated statements, for example "It seems to me that Sailing has lost confidence in itself and like an insecure overachiever is scrambling...". From my perspective these statements have no merit and I am very confident that Sailing is progressing in a positive way. In fact, I would proudly say that for the first time in the history of World Sailing, there is a regulation in place challenging the World Sailing Council to stay competitive by undertaking a strategic review. And within this regulation, a clear framework and timing has been outlined to ensure that progress continues to be made.

Given that this is the first time the World Sailing Council has had to address this challenge, only one area was missing: the strategic consideration of events and equipment for the future of sailing. In order to address this missing piece, last November at our annual meeting and as part of World Sailing's strategic review, the Board made three submissions concerning the future of sailing in terms of events and equipment. All three were voted on and approved by the majority of the members and together with the recommendations on the five events to be reviewed, the three submissions are forming the framework for the decision process according to World Sailing regulations. We are clearly not having any confidence issues, but a lot of options to be decided upon for the future of our sport.

Second, I want to address comments made with regards to media and audience e.g. "sailing has never been a spectator's sport". These kinds of comments have recently appeared as part of the Events evaluation and I have a hard time understanding the reasoning for these statements as part of the events selection process.

Let me be clear, I see our sports presentation as being very important. And yes, in the past we have not used the opportunities given to us by new media, but this is changing. Again, for the first time ever, World Sailing now has a clear plan on how to present our sport using new media and new technology. The World Sailing team has been working very hard in building a strong communication plan that will enhance the distribution of our sport at all levels and Tokyo 2020 will have a much improved platform. By using new media and new technologies such as SAP Analytics, sailors can have a better understanding of their performance at all times. Furthermore, new technologies make our sport more accessible and understandable to newcomers and therefore increase our audience. Already, the feed from our World Cup Series Rounds and Final are distributed to 36 broadcasters which has resulted in 2017 in more than 3,834 hours of live, delayed, highlight, repeat and news coverage being broadcast across 195 nations in all 6 continents.

In my opinion a good sports presentation does not necessarily have a link to the equipment used, linking the process of selecting events and how we promote our sport via new media seems out of context and should not be mixed.

Third, in discussing the revision process of events, - one design and manufactured one design has been made a major issue. Accusations about one or the other being more fair or better than the other solution.

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Our sport is equipment driven, which is leading to a lot of politics being played when voting on new Olympic equipment. There is a trend to favour manufactured one design equipment (believing this will secure a level playing field). However, when it comes to Olympic level sailing, more funding naturally gives more possibilities to some nations to buy more equipment and thus optimizing the manufacturing tolerances to optimize the fit of the boat to the athlete/team. On the other hand, equipment built by several builders gives the freedom to customize, making the testing and customization a driving cost factor.

Looking at history, there is no clear answer on cost vs a total level playing field for equipment. The cost of a sailor's Olympic campaign is expensive, as there are cost elements far bigger than equipment being addressed. However, if we look at the longevity of our sport going forward and the benefits to our sport on all levels and the increasing importance of sustainability, our main concern should be the quality and longevity of equipment. I believe that this is the reason for tightening quality control as part of the new Olympic classes contract being implemented.

Fourth, I want to address the EU competition law that relates to equipment issues as this is subject with a lot of debate within the Sailing world. I can assure you that the Board is taking this extremely seriously and several measures are being taken to review this complex area.

Currently World Sailing has revised the contracts with our Olympic equipment manufacturers, however, the issue we are facing is that when selecting equipment for a discipline we are in fact granting exclusivity in favour of the equipment chosen as other Classes fitting the discipline are not able to compete in getting access to the discipline for a long period. The new changes in the Regulations allow for a retendering process every eight years – opening the discipline up for the possibility of new equipment and leaving the decision after an evaluation for the Council to decide whether or not to keep the equipment being used. Again, just to be clear, the issue we are addressing at our mid-year meeting in May, is focused only on the selection of the new events to be added to the 2024 Olympic programme – all decisions related to equipment will be made in November.

Fifth, is the subject of the IOC. In debates around the sailing world, it has been mentioned that the IOC is demanding change. I must say that this is not the case. The review of Olympic events is motivated by our own World Sailing regulations, however, the IOC Agenda 2020 should be seen as a source of inspiration and guidance.

While there have been different articles indicating that the “Olympic Movement has lost its way”, I have found this to be contrary to all of our dealings with the IOC. They are taking the future development of the Olympic Games concept and host venues very seriously, and are providing support and advice to International Federations based on proven data and studies. As a sport governing body, it is our role to process all this information and adapt it to our sport.

Now, with those debates put to rest, I want to focus on our goals and objectives for the future. Considering the challenges Sailing is facing when “competing” with other sports, we should have two clear objectives in mind: to be attractive to new sailors and to reduce the dropout rate among teenagers, high schoolers and university level students.

Sailing is a global sport and benefits from a long history and legacy across all continents. One way to keep bringing positive developments to our sport on all levels in all countries is to be focused on core global goals. In order to do that, I see the main actions going forward focused on the following: Improving our gender balance, attracting and capturing the interest of youth and growing our global audience.

I believe that the vision for the Olympic sports presentation of sailing should offer the best possible value to Sailing and strengthen the position of Sailing within the Olympic Games, including both universal events and events that showcase diversity and innovation of sailing.

Looking forward to the decision in May, the selection regarding the future events for the 2024 Olympic Games should strongly be dependent on whether the suggested event is relevant for the Olympic programme, whether it fulfills our mission and whether it positively impacts our goals. By exercising the revision of the five events in question and applying the three submissions approved by a big majority at our annual meeting last November, this will undoubtedly put some of the traditional events under pressure. That said any decision to develop the sport will never come easy, but we must think about what is best for the future development of our sport.

The current trends show that Olympic classes are weakening at the national level and losing Olympic status for a class in many instances increases the activity level at the national level – to the benefit of sailing in general.

Today with the guidance of the IOC Agenda 2020 we actually have a new option: creating a new mixed Olympic event for the strong traditional Olympic classes instead of maintaining the status quo with traditional women's and men's disciplines.

Some may ask the question: will the traditional events grow at the national level? I believe they will. A Class will maintain Olympic status and at the same time introduce a new discipline. It will most likely create the first multi-medals at the World Championship and continental level in our sport but it will be anchored in strong classes rooted worldwide. Furthermore, it will send a strong signal to young and new sailors that sailing as a sport has a clear pathway that is not only well defined for each separate gender but also mixed.

Therefore, I believe that the Olympic programme in 2024 should have four mixed events creating a strong platform supporting the change for improving the gender balance throughout our sport. By having four mixed events we will become more inclusive and still being able to accommodate different nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds in our ten Olympic events.

To accommodate the submission for a broader representation of physiques for women and men, we should evaluate two possibilities for dealing with the issue.

Option 1: Adding a new Offshore mixed event

The introduction of a new Offshore mixed event will be showcasing a major part of our sport, making a strong statement that 70.8% of the global surface is the field of play for Sailing. This event option will also secure interest at the grassroots to encourage youth to stay in our sport when being introduced to keelboat- and endurance racing.

Option 2: Adding two single-handed technical disciplines (M/W)

The introduction of having two single-handed technical disciplines facilitating one event for women covering the representation of an average weight of 50kg and an event for men representing a weight range above 90 kg. These event options in combination with existing events will secure the fulfillment of a broad representation of physique for men and women. Furthermore, this new event will facilitate the growth of women's sailing worldwide.

To conclude, understandably a major concern from MNA's is linked to equipment costs. However, while we look at the option given in the framework, there are clearly slates of events making it possible to maintain the existing equipment. This can be done through the inclusion of "new" mixed events and only adding new equipment for two events (one possibility to be Kite which is relatively cost efficient). From my perspective, maintaining existing equipment and at the same time develop the presentation of our sport should be our highest priority.

The decision to be taken at the upcoming council meeting in May is important for the future of sailing; and I am confident that in the end we will have a strong final slate of 10 events and a well rooted sports presentation going forward.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kim Andersen', written over a horizontal line.

Kim Andersen
President