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Refusal of entry of Russian and Belarussian athletes

To the representatives of the World Gymnastics

Immediately after the outbreak of the war, Estonia condemned the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and Belarus. Since the beginning of the war, Estonia has provided comprehensive support to Ukraine and has advocated for the strongest possible sanctions against Russia and Belarus in all areas.

As of 10 March 2022, Estonia ceased issuing tourist visas to Russian and Belarusian citizens at its embassies, and as of 18 August 2022, entry into Estonia was prohibited for all citizens of the Russian Federation holding valid visas for tourism or business travel purposes, including participation in sporting competitions or cultural events held in Estonia.

Since the start of the war, the Government of the Republic of Estonia, the Ministry of Culture, and the Estonian Olympic Committee have maintained a clear and consistent position: Russian and Belarusian athletes, coaches, referees, and officials should not participate in international sporting competitions until the war in Ukraine has ended. This position reflects the reality that Ukrainian athletes are unable to train and prepare under equal conditions, as many have been displaced, affected by destruction, or have chosen to defend their country and people. In this context, calls to separate sport from politics ring hollow when thousands of innocent Ukrainians have lost their lives and the sport has been constantly instrumentalized by Russian and Belarusian regimes.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, enabled by the Belarusian government, is abhorrent and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and obligations. Respect for human rights and peaceful relations between nations are core principles underpinning international sport. While respecting the autonomy of sports organizations, the Government of Estonia — together with many other governments — has called on international sports bodies to uphold and defend these principles. It is therefore deeply regrettable and concerning that some international sports organizations have chosen a different course.

Yours sincerely,


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Secretary General

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