International Federations support Tokyo 2020 postponement

By: Michael Houston
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International Federations have expressed unanimous support for the decision to postpone this year's Olympic Games in Tokyo to 2021.

Organisation's to have backed the move include the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF), the International Canoe Federation (ICF) and World Archery.

The International Judo Federation (IJF) is another, with President Marius Vizer saying postponement was "wise" and " the best decision to protect everybody".

Answering questions on *Twitter*, Vizer said it was "an exceptional time for the humanity" and that the IJF would work with the IOC to sort out a new qualification system when the coronavirus crisis allowed.

The ITTF said in a statement that the IOC had been "left with no other choice".

"We are conscious of how difficult it is to deal with the organisation of a

quadrennial event of such magnitude as the Olympic and Paralympic Games," ITTF President Thomas Weikert said.

"We can only imagine the hours and hours of work that the IOC Executive Board, its staff, the Tokyo Organising Committee and Tokyo Municipality have put into this project since September 2013," added ITTF secretary general Raul Calin.

"However, the decision to postpone is a message of hope.

"The Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held and the IOC and Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee can count on the support of the ITTF to make these Games the greatest in history."

The IOC decided to postpone the Games due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The have been more than 400,000 confirmed cases worldwide and in excess of 17,000 deaths, with strict travel restrictions in place across the globe and numerous nations in states of lockdown in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus.

Baseball and softball are due to make a first Olympic appearance since 2008 in Japan and World Baseball Softball Confederation President Riccardo Fraccari said WBSC "welcomes and fully supports" postponing the Games.

"The WBSC stands in solidarity with the Olympic Movement during this difficult time and will work closely with the IOC to manage the completion of the Olympic qualification process for baseball, which now has more time to be conducted, providing an equal opportunity for the teams and their players."

Two qualifying tournaments for Tokyo 2020 had previously been postponed because of the pandemic.

ICF President José Perurena added his support for the "unavoidable" decision.

"We congratulate the IOC, the Japanese Government and Tokyo 2020 organisers for making this brave but essential decision", Perurena said.

"The ICF is ready to work with the IOC and Tokyo 2020 to ensure the transition to a new date can happen as smoothly as possible."

Tokyo 2020 organisers are yet to announce new dates for the Games, but the office of Japanese Prime Minister Shinz? Abe said they would be held in the summer of 2021.

World Archery President U?ur Erdener said he understands some athletes could be disappointed, but approves of the move.

"This is not an easy situation, especially for the athletes who had been training hard for Tokyo 2020.

"I hope that everyone understands why this decision has been made and I urge archers around the world to retain hope and reset for this new timetable."

International Union of Modern Pentathlon (UIPM) President Klaus Schormann urged "we must all take drastic action to combat this coronavirus" as his organisation welcomed the Olympic postponement.

The UIPM also announced the cancellation of the rest of its World Cup season due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Skateboarding was due to make its Olympic debut this summer, but now has to wait until 2021.

World Skate President Sabatino Aracu was another figure to offer his backing to the decision announced today.

"Of course, we fully agree with the decision made by the IOC and Japanese authorities", Aracu said.

"It was not an easy choice, as we are talking about maybe the most awaited and valuable sport event of the year.

"This is why we appreciate such a brave and well-thought-out measure, that shows a full commitment to the safeguarding of athletes' health.

"We thank IOC President Thomas Bach who has carried on with his mandate by following all the necessary and unavoidable steps before making this announcement."

World Sailing has also approved of the move and will now work towards planning new dates for qualification events.

International Hockey Federation chief executive Thierry Weil thanked the parties involved for ensuring a decision could be reached.

Weil said: "This decision brings clarity to the global hockey community and I'm sure it's supported by all athletes who are currently facing important challenges to train at this unprecedented time."

World Rugby was another International Federation to support the decision, calling it "prudent and necessary" in a statement.

World Rugby chairman Sir Bill Beaumont said: "Solidarity is one of the foundations of rugby's character-building values, and there has never been a time when our sense our solidarity respect and friendship has been more important.

"We are intensively examining scenario planning for the scheduled July internationals, should such a plan be required, while also considering ways to optimise the international competition calendar on and off the field for all when it is safe and appropriate to resume rugby activities."

United World Wrestling (UWW) President Nenad Lalovic has said the delay "will have a significant impact on our athletes and the remaining qualification process" and that UWW is waiting to receive more details from the IOC on the qualification process.

"I understand that this delay impacts your preparations, and there are many uncertainties at this moment, but I assure your health and safety remain our top priority", Lalovic told athletes.

"As things change, I promise to keep you up to date."

He added that the UWW Executive Board would would hold a teleconference in the coming weeks to discuss remaining events in 2020.