



COVID-19:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE SPORTS INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY



PREAMBLE

THE THOUGHTS OF THE PLAYERS AND ATHLETES OF THE WORLD are with the families of those who have lost lives and those who are seriously ill, as well as with the courageous and highly skilled health care professionals who are at the front line.

Sport – which is controlled by international and national sports governing bodies, professional sports leagues, employers, business and governments – has a responsibility to unite and demonstrate the highest standards of leadership and citizenship as the world addresses the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 is having a dramatic impact on the sports industry and community, fans, and all people practicing sport. Major regional and national professional leagues on all continents have been indefinitely shutdown. In some countries, competitions and matches continued for a period without fans. Travel restrictions, the imperative of social distancing, quarantine and isolation requirements and the closure of training facilities effectively make sport impossible.

Global and regional mega-sporting events scheduled for 2020 have been postponed for at least a year, including the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, football's 2020 UEFA EUROs, African Cup of Nations and Copa America, and Formula One Grand Prix. The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) World Championships scheduled for May 2020 have been canceled.

These impacts not only threaten the health, human rights, employment and careers of athletes but also the wellbeing of millions whose livelihoods are dependent on the sports industry and its supply chains.

Player and athlete associations have been at the forefront of multi-stakeholder responses throughout sport and across the world to the challenges and threats presented to their industries and members by COVID-19. Those discussions can be a template for sport at the global, regional and national levels.



EIGHT GUIDING PRINCIPLES are emerging through intense dialogue in the constantly changing environment:

I. ***Sport can help the world overcome COVID-19.***

Sport can lead in helping the world overcome COVID-19 through inspiration, education and a commitment to best practice.

As a global and mobile industry and community involving physical work that attracts huge crowds, sport has a heavy responsibility to conduct itself in a way that advances and does not exacerbate the already extremely high threat to public health. Sport should closely follow the requirements of the public authorities including the World Health Organization (WHO), which has emphasised that young people are not immune from contracting, succumbing to or transmitting COVID-19.

II. ***Share the best and most up to date information.***

Athletes and affected groups are entitled to access the best and most up to date information including expert public health, medical and legal advice as well as political and economic considerations. Freedom of association and expression including of the press is essential to this, as is the protection of whistleblowers.

III. ***Respect for human and labour rights.***

Sport has a responsibility to proactively respect and uphold the internationally recognised human and labour rights of athletes and those it affects. This includes not causing or contributing to harmful health and safety outcomes for athletes, fans or the general public. The advice of public authorities including the WHO should be heeded and a conservative approach taken to public and athlete health.

Effective recognition of freedom of association and the right to organise and collective bargaining provides the basis to effectively address suddenly emerging challenges including health and safety, economic restructuring and the preservation and promotion of decent work.

IV. *Care for people.*

Now is the time for the sports industry and community to show it cares about its people. The physical and mental health of people and their social wellbeing should remain a high priority. Sport's expertise in relation to the personal development and wellbeing of people should be comprehensively deployed.

V. *Athlete engagement and social dialogue.*

There should be high levels of engagement and social dialogue with athletes including through their associations to ensure that the various risks are identified and addressed in order to maximise athlete trust and confidence. Economic and political concerns should not drive decision-making but rather athlete health and safety.

Athletes should not and cannot be made to train, compete, travel or otherwise work in circumstances that would be an unreasonable risk to their health and safety. The continued exposure to COVID-19, returning to competition without adequate preparation and excessive load after return are particular risks.

VI. *Global and stakeholder governance.*

The universal threat of the pandemic reinforces the need of society and, in turn, sport to invest in and respect strong global institutions, including the United Nations and its agencies such as the WHO. Sport should be aligned to serving the interests of all stakeholders and affected groups.

All key stakeholders and affected groups should be involved in the making of important decisions in an open and transparent manner, including governments, sports governing bodies, leagues, teams, stadia, broadcasters and sponsors and, of course, athletes and their associations.

VII. *Impact mitigation and recovery planning.*

Sport is a vital cultural force and will undoubtedly play a central role in rebuilding communities and economies once the pandemic has been successfully managed.

The short and medium term impacts on sports which have limited liquidity may be profound and threaten the viability of sports bodies, leagues, teams and athlete careers as well as the millions who derive a living through sport and its supply chains. All key stakeholders should unite to secure the ongoing viability of sport so that sport can contribute to maximising public health.

All key stakeholders should further unite and work together to mitigate against the harm of COVID-19 and plan collectively for the long-term recovery of the sports industry and the galvanisation of the sports community. The wider economic impact is also likely to affect the viability of key businesses that have long supported sport financially including broadcasters, sponsors, brands, media organisations and commercial partners.

Moreover, sport's important social, cultural and educational role should be part of government stimulus packages being designed to help drive a strong economic recovery.

VIII. **Mega-sporting events.**

In the current environment, mega-sporting events are likely to exacerbate the risk to public health. Mega-sporting events should only be held if:

- 1 public and athlete health is secured including in accordance with these Guiding Principles;
- 2 the mega-sporting event can be open to the local communities and fans which have invested in the hosting of the event;
- 3 the universality of the event can be safely secured for all athletes, sports and nations;
- 4 the integrity of sport can be safeguarded; and
- 5 the economic imperative to first secure the ongoing viability of the sport sector has been met.

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Nyon, Switzerland

*The **World Players Association** is the exclusive global voice of organised players and athletes across professional sport. A sector of UNI Global Union, it brings together 85,000 players through more than 100 player associations in over 60 countries. Its role is to ensure that the voice of organised players is heard at the highest levels in the decision-making of international sport.*