

The IPC's weekly update on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) - 02/04/2020

The purpose of this update is to keep everyone within the Paralympic Movement informed of the latest developments with the COVID-19 pandemic and how it relates to the Paralympic Games and Para sport.

This week the new dates for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games were confirmed. Undertaking such a wide-ranging consultation exercise - and finding a resolution in six days for the world's first and third biggest sport events - is hugely appreciated by all in the Paralympic Movement. We would like to extend our thanks to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, Tokyo Metropolitan Government for their work with the IPC in resolving this so swiftly.

Now the hard work begins of delivering in 17 months a Games that have been nearly seven years in the making. However, given the incredibly hard work and co-operative progress that has been evident in recent weeks, we are confident that not only will the solutions be found, but that these Games will be a triumph of human endeavour.

We will continue to use the IPC's digital channels to promote and increase awareness of all the positive work that is taking place in the Paralympic Movement right now. We are open to content you have either created or are planning to. Please make us aware of your initiatives at media@paralympic.org.

Finally, now the new dates are confirmed, we can't wait to see you all in Tokyo on 24 August 2021 - it's going to be memorable.

This week's update contains the following information:

- A message from IPC President Andrew Parsons
- Tokyo 2020 next steps
- World Health Organisation update

- Latest media statements from the IPC - 'Tokyo 2020 Paralympics set for August 2021' and 'Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes'

A message from IPC President Andrew Parsons

Dear athletes, dear members, dear friends,

This week, I wanted to write to you on a more personal note.

The COVID-19 crisis has changed the life of every single human being on this planet. No one is out of reach of this virus and, as such, we all need to follow the expert health advice to socially distance, self-isolate and wash our hands more than ever.

Outside of family members or people we live with, we basically froze every activity that brings humans physically together. This momentaneous and extremely tough new reality would be easier if we knew how long it would last but, the truth is, nobody knows. The uncertainty is hard to process.

It is ok to not be ok and at a time when we are encouraged to be apart, we must unite like never before. We must look out for and support each other and prioritise health and well-being above everything else.

Just like the many billions worldwide, I'm anxious at what is going on. After the outbreak cut short my visit to some Nordic NPCs, I have been home in Brasilia now since 13 March. Since then, I have left home only to buy food. My priority has been to protect my family and cooperate fully with the advice to isolate. On top of this, a historic decision had to be made to postpone the Paralympic Games for the first time in our history.

Instead of complaining during this difficult period, I decided on three things:

1. To endure. Inspired by the courage and determination of Paralympians, I decided that I will come out of this crisis stronger and a better human being. With their example of resilience, discipline and

hard work, I have set the goal to endure this period while supporting others, doing my part for the collective good.

2. To focus on what I can do rather than what I cannot do. Paralympians maximise what they can do with their bodies. They do not waste time thinking on what they cannot do. Again, with this example, some creativity and change in focus, I am being able to perform as a father, as a husband, as a friend and as a professional. We have had some tough weeks in the Paralympic Movement, and some more will come. But, by focusing on what I had to do and could do, I was able to make the decisions that needed to be made and lead the IPC.
3. To understand that human contact is more than being physically together. Right now, we must avoid being physically together to stop the spread of the virus. However, we still can be in contact with the ones we love. Nothing can beat the power of saying "I love you" to our dearest ones. It is as good for the one who says it as it is to the one who hears it. Today, we have the technology that can bring us all together even if we must be physically apart. To express solidarity and empathy is the most important thing we can do right now.

The world may currently look terrible, but people have the power to beat the coronavirus. If we all endure, focus on what we can do and care about each other enough to stay apart, then we will overcome this crisis.

One huge positive from this new and surreal way of life is that the best of humanity is coming out. Whether it be communities singing together from windows or balconies, athletes offering keep-fit advice online, or individuals buying groceries for elderly neighbours, these wonderful examples can only make you smile.

The people that have impressed me the most during this crisis are the incredible selfless individuals on the frontline, endangering themselves for all of us. Words cannot describe the debt of gratitude we all owe doctors, nurses and all hospital staff for their tireless efforts. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you. While we fight the virus from our homes, they are risking all to care for the ones fighting for their lives.

I would also like to say thank you to the unsung heroes, the supermarket staff, the pharmacists, the truck drivers and all those people who are maintaining supplies to our villages, towns and cities.

Life is difficult at the moment, but I know we will prevail. Every challenge presents a new opportunity and next summer I promise you that the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will be extra special. With more time to prepare, they will be a global celebration of human resilience and a sensational showcase of sport.

Finally, during this time the IPC Governing Board, the IPC staff and our incredible network of volunteers are continuing their outstanding work remotely. Working from their home offices or dining room tables, they are ensuring that when the world does get back to normal, everything will be in place for our athletes and members.

I wish you all good health.

Andrew Parsons

President

Tokyo 2020 next steps

Tokyo 2020 is currently undertaking a massive organisational exercise. Everything that was booked and planned for in 2020 needs to be moved to 2021: venues, accommodation, accreditation, logistics, medical services, media services, ticketing, broadcast and commercial agreements are just a handful of the many things that need new timelines and frameworks. As a result, there are tens of thousands of contracts and agreements to be reviewed and amended, which will take a little time to sort.

For now, all events to either test or promote the Games have been postponed by Tokyo 2020, while ticket sales to the public have also been suspended. Tokyo 2020 will update us on the rescheduled events and ticket sales when it is appropriate.

The key areas of qualification and classification remain uppermost in IPC planning.

The IPC will work with the International Federations to establish new qualification criteria. As noted last week, the IPC has removed the qualification criteria for Tokyo 2020 from the IPC website. We will let you know as soon as the new criteria is agreed.

The list of cancelled sport events remains on the IPC website and is being regularly updated. You can find details [here](#).

The Classification team is busy analysing the survey data it obtained from the NPCs in relation to the impact of cancelled events on classification opportunities on Tokyo 2020 preparations, as well as several other factors that have arisen in the context of the Games postponement. We will soon finalise and deliver a set of recommendations for the membership regarding rescheduled classification opportunities.

World Health Organisation update

The COVID-19 picture outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) remains a sombre one - they are concerned about its rapid escalation and global spread. It also prompted the United Nations this week to claim that this is the biggest challenge for the world since World War Two.

According to WHO's latest Daily Situation Dashboard on 2 April 2020 09:00 CET, the number of confirmed worldwide cases has more than doubled from this point last week, increasing from 416,686 to 857,641 cases. The WHO predict we will reach one million cases by the weekend. However, it is also noted that already over 190,000 people have fully recovered.

Europe remains the epicentre for new cases, although the United States of America is now the country with the most recorded cases in the world. More than a third of the world's population is in some kind of lockdown, having been asked to stay at home in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19.

The IPC continues to use the WHO and their [site](#) as its main source of information regarding the COVID-19. It provides regular situation reports and have a wide range of guidance on health and protection, travel advice, as well as extensive myth-busting and technical guidance sections.

Together with UNICEF and the International Federation of the Red Cross, the WHO have recently published new guidance for improving access to handwashing. They are also working hard with researchers all over the world to generate the evidence about which medicines are most effective for treating COVID-19. There has been an extraordinary response to their call for countries to join the Solidarity trial, which is comparing four drugs and drug combinations. There is progress and hope amidst the concern.

Last week, we reported how the WHO had launched a WhatsApp messaging service in English that provides the latest news and information on coronavirus - they have now added Arabic, French and Spanish languages. The service includes details on symptoms and how people can protect themselves and others. It also provides the latest situation reports and numbers in real-time to help government decision-makers protect the health of their populations.

The service can be accessed by a link that opens a conversation on WhatsApp. Users can simply type "hi", "salut", "hola" or "مرحبا" to activate the conversation, prompting a menu of options that can help answer their questions about COVID-19. You can join WHO's Health Alert on WhatsApp:

Arabic

Send "مرحبا" to +41 22 501 70 23 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017023?text=مرحبا

French

Send "salut" to +41 22 501 72 98 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017298?text=salut

Spanish

Send "hola" to +41 22 501 76 90 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017690?text=hola

English

Send "hi" to +41 79 893 18 92 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41798931892?text=hi

Latest IPC media statements

Tokyo 2020 Paralympics set for August 2021 (drafted 30 March)

The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games have been rescheduled to take place between 24 August and 5 September 2021.

The dates were confirmed on Monday (30 March) by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

This decision was taken under three main considerations:

1. To protect the health of the athletes and everyone involved and to support the containment of the COVID-19 virus.
2. To safeguard the interests of the athletes and of Olympic and Paralympic sport.
3. The global international sports calendar.

These new dates give health authorities and all involved in the organisation of the Games the maximum time to deal with the constantly changing landscape and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. They will also minimise any disruption that the postponement will cause to the international sports calendar. Additionally, they will provide sufficient time to finish the qualification process. The same heat mitigation measures as planned for 2020 will be implemented.

IPC President Andrew Parsons said: "It is fantastic news that we could find new dates so quickly for the Tokyo 2020 Games. The new dates provide certainty for the athletes, reassurance for the stakeholders and something to look forward to for the whole world.

“When the Paralympic Games do take place in Tokyo next year, they will be an extra special display of humanity uniting as one, a global celebration of human resilience and a sensational showcase of sport.

“With the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games 512 days away, the priority for all those involved in the Paralympic Movement must be to focus on staying safe with their friends and family during this unprecedented and difficult time.

“Now that the dates are confirmed, the IPC will work with the International Federations to establish new qualification criteria which will fully respect those that have already qualified for the Games.”

IOC President Thomas Bach said: “I want to thank the International Federations for their unanimous support and Continental Associations of National Olympic Committees for the great partnership and their support in the consultation process over the last few days. I would also like to thank the IOC Athletes’ Commission with whom we have been in constant contact.

“With this announcement, I am confident that, working together with the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the Japanese government and all our stakeholders, we can master this unprecedented challenge. Humankind currently finds itself in a dark tunnel. These Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 can be a light at the end of this tunnel.”

The President of the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee Yoshiro Mori said: “IOC President Thomas Bach and the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee held a conference call today to discuss in detail the revised dates of the Tokyo 2020 Games. Minister for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games Hashimoto Seiko and Tokyo Governor Koike joined the call. I proposed that the Games should be hosted between July and August 2021 and I really appreciate that President Bach, having discussed this proposal with the various international sport federations and other related organisations, kindly accepted my proposal.

“A certain amount of time is required for the selection and qualification of athletes and for their training and preparation, and the consensus was that staging the rescheduled Games during summer vacation in Japan would be preferable. In terms of transportation, arranging volunteers and the provision of tickets for those in Japan and overseas, as well as allowing for

the COVID-19 situation, we think that it would be better to reschedule the Games one year later than planned, in the summer of 2021.

“Notwithstanding the postponement of the Olympic and Paralympic Games for the first time in history and various other issues that have already been highlighted, the event schedule is the cornerstone of future preparations, and I am convinced that taking this decision promptly will help speed up future preparations. I would like to thank all stakeholders, including the host city Tokyo and the Government of Japan, for their hard work during this short period. The Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee will continue to work hard for the success of next year's Games.”

The Governor of Tokyo, Koike Yuriko, said: “In consideration of the global coronavirus outbreak, we need a certain timeframe before we fully prepare for the delivery of a Games that is safe and secure for the athletes and spectators.

“The preparation for the new dates will go smoothly as the dates match with the same timeframe as the original competition dates corresponding with ticketing, venue staffing, volunteers and transport.

“The athletes, volunteers, torchbearers and local municipality governments have been concerned about the situation. Since we now have concrete new dates to aim for, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government will commit all its resources and work closely with the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, the national government, and other stakeholders to fully prepare for the delivery of a Games that is safe and secure.”

Chelsey Gotell, Chairperson of the IPC Athletes' Council, said: “I think these new dates will be a huge sense of relief for the whole athlete community who will be appreciative at the speed they have been set. With more than 500 days to go until the Paralympics, athletes can mentally reset and begin thinking about their 2021 plans.

“For now though, training for Tokyo is not the priority, staying safe is, and I hope all athletes, their families and friends follow the advice of their local authorities during this difficult period for the whole world.”

Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes (drafted 18 March)

At the IPC, the health and well-being of Para athletes is our top priority and we are working hard to gather as much information as possible on the potential impact of COVID-19 to provide appropriate advice.

Concern has been raised that Para athletes may be at more risk of severe disease from COVID-19, in the same way as has been stated for elderly people and for people with certain underlying health conditions.

However, the Paralympic athlete population is not a homogeneous group. Para athletes are all individuals with very different underlying conditions and health needs, so the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to COVID-19 is not appropriate or representative of an individual athlete's risk.

Nevertheless, because of the severity of the impairment or any associated immune deficit or chronic condition, some athletes could be more vulnerable. There are no current studies on the potential impacts of coronavirus on Para athletes. The honest answer is that we don't know because this is a new strain of Coronavirus and there are very little data available.

Consultation with the IPC Medical Committee and International Federation medical experts, as well as information provided by the WHO, indicates that there has been no evidence that an athlete with disability in general have a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Para athletes are also more experienced than the general population to following hand hygiene, coughing etiquette and general infection avoidance procedures as part of illness prevention education - this has been a principle of Para athlete education for some time. However, at this time we all should be even more vigilant in this regard.

The IPC will continue to seek advice from the WHO, but ultimately athletes are the best judge of their own body and their medical needs.

Our advice for Para athletes is that they should follow the current medical guidance from the WHO and their national guidelines on prevention and seek advice from medical professionals. We would urge any athlete displaying the symptoms to report to their local medical authorities without delay.

Important website links

- [World Health Organisation](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)