

## ITF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SUMMARY VIRTUAL, 15-16 MARCH 2021



The ITF Board of Directors met virtually for the 15-16 March meeting in a continuation of the fortnightly update meetings that have been conducted since March 2020 due to global pandemic restrictions.

The Board were provided with a brief overview of the 137<sup>th</sup> IOC Session meetings which took place on March 10-12 and during which the sitting IOC President Thomas Bach was re-elected for a further term, up to 2025. President Bach stood unopposed. The ITF Board has recommended that a summary of key points relevant to tennis from the IOC Agenda 2020 closing report to be distributed to Regional and National Association boards for awareness and alignment.

The main themes that formed the basis for topics addressed in the 137<sup>th</sup> Session were summarised:

- Solidarity - the world is more challenged than ever, with unity and solidarity at risk
- Digitalisation – to engage directly and with more youth
- Sustainable development – climate action is the biggest threat to society
- Credibility – trust will be the deciding factor as to whether society can function; the power of sport enables societies to build bridges
- Economic and financial resilience – post COVID we will need to pay back and not burden future generations. The world will no longer be what it was before.

The IOC has expressed confidence that Tokyo 2020 will take place and an update regarding restrictions to the number of spectators due to COVID protocols will be forthcoming closer to the event. These restrictions are applicable across all groups, including general public ticketing as well as government delegations. In the meetings, the IOC acknowledged the advanced state of readiness and commended the efficiency of TOCOG. The operational planning for the Olympic and Paralympic Tennis Events remains on track. ITF teams are not currently permitted to conduct site visits or court and lighting tests, however, according to the information provided by TOCOG and from discussions with them, the ITF Board was informed that no significant issues have been identified at this time.

The IOC informed the 137<sup>th</sup> Session that an in-depth review of the bid proposal from Brisbane, Australia, currently the preferred host city for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, is underway.

In line with the IOC Gender Equality movement, the ITF's Advantage All programme continues to progress. The ITF Board was informed that through recent Regional Association Board elections, two RAs have reached parity, with Tennis Europe at 44% and the Oceania Tennis Federation, which elected 5 women for 8 Board positions, approximately 60%.

### **ITF2024 Strategy Progress Report**

The Board received an update on ITF 2024 projects and business plan. The ITF2024 programmes of work are at midway point. It is important to note that the majority of ITF staff have not been into the office for nearly one year and the way of working has needed to adapt and cater for this situation. It is still difficult to measure the full impact of the pandemic. Projects continue in 2021 although prioritised due to COVID measures and either maintained, reduced, or suspended. The ITF's over-arching goal remains "30 by 30" which denotes its quest for 30 million more players by 2030.

### **Stakeholder Engagement:**

The Board received an update on three key areas of stakeholder engagement:

- 1 **Professional Tennis** in collaboration with the ATP & WTA Tours. The ITF has already established a working group and is in the process of identifying a number of projects and synergies with the WTA, not least, addressing the fluidity and quality of the player pathway. A similar working group has now been established with the ATP with kick off meetings planned for later in March 2021.
- 2 **Global Tennis Governance** in collaboration with tennis major stakeholders ("T7"). A working group has been formed to identify common goals, align strategy, and agree a programme of work supported by an external audit consulting firm.

**3 ITF Global Membership**, the formation of the Stakeholder Engagement Taskforce (“SET”) has made progress and has been openly acknowledged by Regional and National Associations as making improvements in their working relationship with the ITF. The SET process and programmes of work will help to establish common goals and alignment on global strategies where most needed.

#### **Digital Transformation:**

Whilst the ITF has operated the work-from-home set up for almost a year, Office 365 has allowed staff to remain connected and to work remotely, minimising issues inherent to these working conditions. A modernised and more efficient project management system has been put in place by IT, mainly through the Smartsheet application and reporting dashboard – which also stores knowledge and preserves knowledge transmission.

#### **Advantage All: Gender Equality**

The AA strategy is gaining momentum. The Leadership development programme was launched in March and a high level Advantage All Global Forum will be held on April 12<sup>th</sup> as a virtual event with high profile speakers and an impactful content agenda to address the barriers and discuss solutions for equal opportunity in tennis.

#### **INTEGRITY**

##### **Unsanctioned events**

The ITF Board received an overview of the integrity-related risks posed by certain types of event. This includes events that do not have integrity protection measures in place and/or are not subject to the Tennis Anti-Corruption Program, and for which betting markets are created. A disproportionately high number of betting alerts in 2020 arose from those events.

#### **PATHWAY**

##### **ITF 2021 Professional Tennis calendars**

ITF circuits and major events are running at reduced capacity in 2021 versus 2019 due to the continued restrictions cause by the COVID 19 pandemic. The tournament calendars are published here:

[International Tennis Federation | ITF \(itftennis.com\)](https://www.itftennis.com)

##### **ITF World Tennis Tour**

The Balanced Calendar Fund, previously approved by the ITF Board, is being used to assist eligible nations the option to upgrade \$15k tournaments to \$25k.

In order to protect the ITF WTT player rankings and system, the ITF Board has approved an extension of the 2019 “frozen” COVID ranking points by an additional 52 weeks.

##### **Wheelchair classification update**

The ITF has classified 209 players to date with circa 12 athletes with potential to go to Tokyo 2020 Paralympics still to undergo this process.

In 2015, the IPC applied an improved and globally consistent classification system as a requirement for all parasports to continue to be included in the Paralympics Games. Since that time, the ITF has continued to revise and improve the wheelchair tennis classification criteria based on more specific data for tennis. Dr Babette Pluim is leading the ITF wheelchair tennis classification review into the minimum impairment criteria for each of the seven eligible impairment types. The project is being led by a group of medical experts and will involve consultation with wheelchair stakeholders. Their initial recommendations will be provided to the relevant representatives by the end of March 2021 for feedback.

##### **Beach Tennis**

The ITF Beach Tennis World Tour has suffered particularly devastating effects of the pandemic and related travel restrictions, resulting in a sharp drop in the number of tournaments Year-on-Year. The ITF forecasts the calendar will operate between 10-15% capacity compared to a normal year, although it is hoped that this situation will improve over the course of 2021. The Beach Tennis ranking is therefore revised to protect players and the ITF Board has approved an extension to the current frozen ranking period due to end 28 March 2021, by an additional 12 weeks to 4 July 2021.

## **Finance & Audit Committee**

PwC, the ITF auditors presented the audit report in which, notwithstanding the significant financial impact of the COVID-19 hiatus and the impact of Brexit on foreign exchange markets, no significant issues were raised. The ITF Finance and Audit Committee presented the Accounts to the ITF Board which they reviewed and unanimously approved.

## **Development**

### **Worldwide Participation**

Development continues to work towards The ITF's goal of increasing participation worldwide from 87m to 120m players by 2030: "30 by 30". The ITF Global Tennis Data Report 2021 will be published in July 2021. The global data provided by member nations in this report informs the ITF development strategy and where investment is to be spent. The 2021 development investment is \$9.44m, less than the previous two years but it reflects similar level as in 2018. The funding is comprised of ITF \$7.2m plus \$2.24m from the 4 Grand Slams® collectively; in addition, all administration and implementation costs are borne by the ITF.

### **World Tennis Number**

To date, 97 nations have signed up for World Tennis Number which represents 78% of the world's playing population. The roll out of this high-quality digital product is going according to plan with a pilot project involving ITF World Junior Tennis tournaments to use WTN an entry acceptance criterion to start in Q4 in 2021.

### **Membership**

Having fulfilled its obligations in compliance with Article 5 of the Constitution, the Board of Directors lifted the suspension of the Brunei Darussalam Tennis Federation's and their Class B membership is reinstated with immediate effect.

**Dave Haggerty**  
**President**