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The legitimacy crisis in international sports governance

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Mogens JENSEN and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

International sports federations (ISFs) play an essential role as global regulators of sport. But today the ISFs are facing a crisis of legitimacy. Huge financial flows generated by sports competitions and events, coupled with inadequate systems of checks and balances and a sort of feudalisation of powers in place, gave rise to widespread corruption and mismanagement. This situation has led stakeholders to contest the legitimacy of ISFs. The scale of corruption in the world of athletics, revealed on 9 November 2015 by the report of the independent commission set up by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), should convince even the more sceptics that it is about time to react.

In a recent report, "Play the Game" concludes that the legitimacy crisis in international sports governance is caused, first and foremost, by flawed institutional design, and in particular by a lack of robust control mechanisms that allow both member federations and external actors to control international sports federations.

In order to regain its legitimacy, ISFs must engage in thorough institutional reforms to install more effective fraud prevention and control mechanisms, but also to change the patterns of their policy and decision-making processes, seeking to ensure transparency and accountability and make these processes more inclusive. ISFs should also pay more attention to the human rights dimension of sport and seek to strengthen the respect for human dignity and fundamental rights through their action.

The Parliamentary Assembly should examine how the Council of Europe, its member States, the international sports federations and other stakeholders can follow up on the recommendations in Assembly Resolution 1875 (2012) on good governance and ethics in sport and Resolution 2053 (2015) on the reform of football governance, and work together to strengthen good governance, democracy and the respect for human rights in the sports world.

Signed (see overleaf)

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