



Resolution 2507 (2023)¹

War of aggression against Ukraine – Participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics?

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly condemns once more, in the strongest terms, the full-scale war of aggression waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, with the complicity of the Belarusian regime. The consequences of this deliberate flouting of international law reverberate far beyond the borders of Ukraine or even of Europe: all regions of the world are affected.
2. No means can be spared to demonstrate our entire repudiation of the Russian and Belarusian leadership and regimes. Politicians and public authorities must lead the way, but major organisations and institutions acting in the public and private spheres should also stand up, bringing the weight of their moral authority and renown to the public consciousness.
3. The sporting world is an influential societal actor which, at national, regional and global levels, wields immense economic, social and even political leverage and the decisions of which have a huge resonance and deep global impact. At its best, sport brings together countries, societies, people and cultures to a playing field where differences can be put aside and the exchanges are based on values such as mutual respect, diversity, equality and inclusion. For these same reasons, the Assembly considers that the sporting world must today play its role in responding to a situation in which a major world power has thrown aside its obligations under international law with such devastating consequences.
4. In April 2022, the Assembly's Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media welcomed the calls by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which urged all international sports federations to relocate or cancel their sports events planned in the Russian Federation or Belarus and recommended international sports federations and sports event organisers not to invite or allow the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials in international competitions. Moreover, the 17th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport (Antalya, Türkiye) adopted on 26 October 2022 a resolution in which the ministers condemned the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine and considered that the Russian Federation and Belarus should not be represented in international sport as long as this aggression continues.
5. Concerned by the ongoing debate within the IOC on the possibility for athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport to participate in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games as "neutral" athletes, the same committee organised a hearing in April 2023 with the participation of invitees active in the ongoing discussions on this question. At this hearing, Assembly members listened to different points of view, including positions on the need to ensure non-discrimination in sport, the wish to keep sport separate and independent from politics and State intervention, as well as further details on the criteria for neutral participation currently under examination by the IOC and how different sports bodies may ultimately take different stances on this matter. The Standing Committee of the Assembly, meeting in Riga on 26 May 2023, held a current affairs debate on this question.

1. *Assembly debate* on 22 June 2023 (18th sitting) (see [Doc. 15795](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Linda Hofstad Helleland). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 22 June 2023 (18th sitting).



6. While recognising the complexity of the issues at stake and that views may differ on the best approach, the Assembly holds that the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the current context is unthinkable, would certainly be used as a tool of propaganda, and would *de facto* prevent other athletes, not least Ukrainian athletes, from participating.

7. Having taken into account all perspectives and arguments raised, the Assembly is convinced that the endeavour undertaken by the IOC to establish a set of acceptable criteria allowing for the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes as neutral, individual competitors in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games cannot provide the necessary guarantees and will not constitute a response worthy of the values of human dignity and peace enshrined in the Olympic Charter.

8. Past experience at the Beijing and Sochi Olympics has shown that the Russian regime is more than ready to misuse the Olympic truce. Bearing in mind that elite Russian and Belarusian athletes receive State salaries and are often part of military sports teams, it seems impossible that they could demonstrate their neutrality and distance from these regimes, let alone make any declaration against the war. Indeed, athletes wishing to do so would certainly be putting themselves in a dangerous situation. Moreover, the individual decisions of each sports body on whether or not to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to take part in the relevant competitions as neutral athletes could only lead to confusion and unequal treatment, and in recent weeks it has been shown that the Russian and Belarusian regimes will nonetheless use any victories of such neutral athletes in their propaganda, thus creating a narrative of acceptance and normalisation that downplays the gravity of the Russian and Belarusian Governments' actions.

9. Above all, the arguments for permitting the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes, on the grounds of neutrality, independence of the sports movement and non-discrimination, do not carry sufficient weight faced with the imperative of condemning and repudiating the atrocities being committed and of demonstrating the international community's complete and unwavering support for Ukraine as the onslaught continues. By imposing the ban in response to military aggression against Ukraine, the IOC would demonstrate its commitment to upholding the values of the Olympic Games, foster the pursuit of peaceful solutions to conflicts and send a clear message to the Russian and Belarusian Governments that their actions have consequences and that the international community stands in solidarity with Ukraine. The Ukrainian fight for freedom is our fight; this should not be forgotten or overlooked and should continue to guide our responses to the Russian war of aggression.

10. The Assembly therefore:

10.1. strongly urges national IOC representatives and national and international sports federations to express their opposition to the IOC's proposal to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate, even as neutral athletes, in the upcoming Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games;

10.2. calls on the IOC and its constituent sports bodies to maintain the position expressed in 2022 and to prohibit the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games and in all other major sporting events, for as long as the war of aggression continues. Such a ban can only enhance and further promote the worthy objectives of peace and equality embodied by the Olympic Movement and by sport in general. It does not weaken or blur the independence and values of sport.