



WORLD
AQUATICS

**GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETE PARTICIPATION
IN AQUATICS EVENTS
DURING PERIODS OF CONFLICT**

in force as from 1 February 2026

1. Purpose and Scope of Application

- 1.1 The present guidelines (the “**Guidelines**”) have been adopted by the World Aquatics Bureau pursuant to its rights and duties set out *inter alia* at clauses 8.8 and 17.1 of the World Aquatics Constitution, and in response to the various wars, hostilities and other conflicts worldwide (each, a “**Conflict**”), with the objectives of ensuring the integrity and security of sporting competitions and the overall respect for Athletes, World Aquatics and Olympic principles and values.
- 1.2 Unless stated otherwise herein, these Guidelines are in respect of athletes:
- (i) having a sport nationality from a “nation in Conflict” (as determined by the World Aquatics Executive in its sole discretion at any time), and
 - (ii) wishing to participate in any senior World Aquatics event or competition (e.g. World Aquatics Championships, World Aquatics Swimming Championships, World Aquatics Masters Championships, World Aquatics World Cups, World Aquatics Diving Recognized events), or in any senior event or competition organised by a Continental Organisation of World Aquatics, in the aquatic sports of swimming, open water swimming, artistic swimming, water polo, diving and high-diving, for all age categories. (“**Events**”). For the avoidance of doubt, the present Guidelines do not apply to age group events and competitions (e.g. World Aquatics Junior Championships, World Aquatics Youth Championships and World Aquatics U20/U18/U16 Championships).

For the purpose of these Guidelines, any athlete meeting the criteria in clause 1.2 is referred to as an “**Athlete**”; such Athlete’s coach, trainer, manager, agent, physiotherapist, medical personnel or any other persons assisting such Athlete at an Event is referred to as “**Support Personnel**”.

These Guidelines shall also apply to Event host(s) and organisers including national member federations and organising committees (“**Organisers**”).

2. Participation Criteria

- 2.1 Subject to these Guidelines, Athletes and their Support Personnel may only participate in Events if they meet the following requirements:
- 2.1.1 Compliance with all World Aquatics Regulations;
 - 2.1.2 No voluntary contractual relationship with any national security agencies, and/or entity or military associated with any government of a nation in Conflict (contractual relationships with sport clubs financed by military or police budgets are excluded);
 - 2.1.3 No support for any Conflicts, including any form of verbal, non-verbal or written expression, explicit or implicit, for any types of political conflicts or war, in particular public statements, including those made in social media (e.g. liking pro-war posts), participation in pro-conflict or pro-war demonstrations or events, and the wearing of any symbol which can reasonably be interpreted as in support for any Conflicts; and

- 2.1.4 Compliance with the Neutral Athlete requirements set out below in clause 3 and the Anti-Doping requirements set out below in Annex 1

3. Application for Status of Neutral Athletes

- 3.1 The Athletes and their Support Personnel shall apply to the Aquatics Integrity Unit ("**AQIU**") (info@aquaticsintegrity.com) to be granted the status of "Neutral Athletes".
- 3.2 The Athletes and their Support Personnel shall only be entitled to participate in an Event after the issuance of Neutral Athlete status by AQIU.
- 3.3 Upon receipt of the application form, AQIU shall carry out verifications to ensure compliance with the applicable requirements for such status of Neutral Athlete, as set out above and with the assistance of an independent international agency, if needed. AQIU shall not be held responsible for any competition missed by an Athlete or Support Personnel while their application is being reviewed.
- 3.4 If at any time after granting the status of Neutral Athlete, AQIU becomes aware of a breach of the criteria or conditions of participation by such Athlete or Support Personnel, AQIU may withdraw the status of Neutral Athlete.

4. Flags

- 4.1 The flag of any nation in Conflict shall not be raised or displayed at any competition venue, nor in any area where ancillary events are held, or any other area controlled by the Organiser of an Event.
- 4.2 Where the use of a flag is necessary to identify Neutral Athletes (e.g., at ceremonies, protocol events, on-site, TV/media displays), the World Aquatics flag shall be used.

5. Anthems

- 5.1 The national anthems of any nation in Conflict (or any other anthem associated with such nation) shall not be played or sung at any time during an Event in any competition venue, nor in any area where ancillary events are held, or any other area controlled by the Organiser of an Event.
- 5.2 The anthem to be used to represent any Neutral Athletes at an official ceremony of an Event (opening or closing, protocol, medal ceremony, etc.) shall be the World Aquatics Anthem.

6. Uniforms

- 6.1 The uniforms (whether competition, warm-up, formal, ceremonial, casual, etc.), clothing, equipment, accessories and personal items belonging to Neutral Athletes and their Support Personnel that are worn, used and/or displayed at Event competition venues, or any area where ancillary events are held, or any other area controlled by the Organiser, shall be a single plain colour and shall not display:

- 6.1.1 any recognition of or reference to a nation in Conflict, or their National Member Federation (such as a flag, coat of arms or any other national symbol or emblem, be it official or unofficial) in any language or format;
- 6.1.2 any support for any Conflict;
- 6.1.3 any commercial or non-commercial emblems or identifications of any organisations or entities from a nation in Conflict;
- 6.1.4 any expression (message, graphical element, symbol, etc.) with a direct or indirect political connotation
- 6.2 The uniforms shall be submitted to World Aquatics for prior approval.

7. Distinctive National Signs

- 7.1 The appearance of all emblems, names, acronyms, colours, flags and anthems linked to nations in Conflict is prohibited at all Events.
- 7.2 Organisers shall withdraw references to nations in Conflict on all documents and publications in both printed and electronic format, including, but not limited to, start lists, result lists, rankings and TV graphics. The acronym to be used for Neutral Athletes shall be "NA".

8. Media Interactions and use of Media Channels

- 8.1 During their interactions with media, Neutral Athletes and their Support Personnel are not allowed to comment on any Conflict, any nation in Conflict, and any other subject that would link their participation in Events to a nation in Conflict and/or their National Member Federation. Their comments must be strictly limited to their performance.
- 8.2 Neutral Athletes, their Support Personnel and their National Member Federation are not allowed to make any publication or other communication with any media channel linking their participation as a Neutral Athlete with any nation in Conflict and/or their National Member Federation.

9. Support Personnel and Technical Officials

- 9.1 World Aquatics reserves the right to limit the number of Support Personnel accompanying Neutral Athletes.
- 9.2 Technical Officials from nations in Conflict shall not be appointed to serve at Events.

10. Events

- 10.1 No Event shall be held in Russia.
- 10.2 If a qualifying competition for the World Aquatics Championships or the Olympic Games is held in a nation in Conflict, a technical official appointed by World Aquatics shall be present to monitor compliance with the World Aquatics regulations. World Aquatics must also be allowed to conduct anti-doping tests at the competition, without any involvement from the national anti-doping

agency.

11. Government or State Official

- 11.1 No government or state official from a nation in Conflict shall be invited to or accredited for an Event.

12. Enforcement of the Criteria and Sanctions

- 12.1 Any violation of these criteria, including providing false information, by any person or entity bound by World Aquatics' rules and regulations, shall be subject to sanctions pursuant to World Aquatics' rules and regulations.
- 12.2 Any infringement committed within the scope of, or in relation to, an Event, in particular with regard to the prohibition of the wearing of emblems or logos referring to nations in Conflict or any communication, whether verbal, non-verbal or written, shall be excluded directly and immediately.
- 12.3 Any infringement committed outside a competition will be subject to disciplinary proceedings by the AQIU pursuant to the World Aquatics Integrity Code.
- 12.4 The World Aquatics Executive shall take all necessary measures to implement and/or amend these Guidelines, as necessary. Any decision taken by the Executive shall be final.
- 12.5 Any discriminatory behaviour towards Athletes and their Support Personnel authorized to participate in an Event under the present criteria shall be subject to disciplinary proceedings pursuant to the World Aquatics Integrity Code.
- 12.6 Any appeal against a decision under the present criteria shall be submitted to the exclusive jurisdiction of CAS within twenty-one (21) days from the date of the decision being appealed. Recourse to ordinary state courts is prohibited.

ANNEX 1 – ANTI-DOPING REQUIREMENTS

This Annex outlines the anti-doping requirements which must be met by Athletes before they may be eligible to participate in an Event. For the sake of clarity, these requirements are not applicable to Support Personnel.

1. High-Risk Events

- 1.1 For the purposes of this Annex, the “High-Risk Events” are:
 - World Aquatics Championships
 - World Aquatics Swimming Championships (25m)
 - World Aquatics Swimming, Diving, Open Water Swimming and Artistic Swimming World Cups
- 1.2 Any Athlete from a nation in Conflict willing to participate in a High-Risk Event must meet all of the following requirements before being eligible to participate:
 - They must not be under any suspension or provisional suspension imposed by any World Anti-Doping Code Signatory for an Anti-Doping Rule violation;
 - They must be submitting whereabouts to a World Anti-Doping Code Signatory by the time their application is submitted;
 - They must have been subject to at least 4 anti-doping tests from a World Anti-Doping Code Signatory in the 12 months prior to the first day of day of the High-Risk Competition. Of these tests, at least one must have been conducted by the ITA on behalf of World Aquatics, using a sample collection agency unrelated to the National Anti-Doping Organizations of the nation in Conflict;
 - They must have accepted to fully comply with the Focused Anti-Doping Program. The Focused Anti-Doping Program will be implemented by the ITA, in coordination with other World Anti-Doping Code Signatories and will include, at the ITA’s discretion and where applicable, targeted testing, thorough investigations and close monitoring of their athlete biological passport and their whereabouts prior to the competition;
 - They must have not associated in any way with any person serving a period of ineligibility for an anti-doping rule violation;
 - They must have accepted to fully comply with any request for information from the ITA, World Aquatics, the World Aquatics Task Force, or the AQIU, including any request to provide further whereabouts information, or the contact details of all athlete Support Personnel they associate with.

2. Other Events

2.1 Any Athlete willing to participate in Events that are not High-Risk Events must meet all of the following requirements before being eligible to participate:

- They must not be under any suspension or provisional suspension imposed by any World Anti-Doping Code Signatory for an Anti-Doping Rule violation;
- They must have accepted to fully comply with the Focused Anti-Doping Program. The Focused Anti-Doping Program will be implemented by the ITA, in coordination with other World Anti-Doping Code Signatories and will include, at the ITA's discretion and where applicable, targeted testing, thorough investigations and close monitoring of their athlete biological passport and their whereabouts prior to the competition;
- They must not have associated in any way with any individual serving a period of ineligibility for an anti-doping rule violation;
- They must have accepted to fully comply with any request for information from the ITA, World Aquatics, the World Aquatics Task Force, or the AQIU, including any request to provide whereabouts information or the contact details of all athlete Support Personnel they associate with.

ANNEX 2 – LIST OF NATIONS IN CONFLICT

1. Belarus
2. Russia