

December 11, 2019

Dr. Thomas Bach
President, International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Dear Dr. Bach,

Firstly, allow me to express my admiration for the efforts you have made towards the development of the Olympics Movement.

My name is Shigefumi Matsuzawa, and I am a member of the House of Councilors in Japan - the host country of next year's Olympic Games.

I am writing to you about the current situation in Japan, where the country's golf course usage tax and the National Public Service Ethics Code stand in violation of the Olympic Charter, in the hope of gaining your understanding of this situation and your views on it.

The golf course usage tax to which I am referring imposes, as a general rule, a standard tax of ¥800 per day for each user of a golf course, with the exception of persons under the age of 18, persons age 70 or older, and disabled persons. The Tokyo Olympics will feature 33 different events, yet other than golf, none of the sports in these events are subject to taxation. Of all the sports beloved by the people of Japan, the only one that is subject to tax is golf. And in addition to this, the Japanese government has decided to make all golf players who take part in the Tokyo Olympics next year exempt from tax.

If things stay the way they are, golf in Japan will be exposed to the double discrimination of golf being subject to tax while other sports are not, and the average golf player being subject to tax while golf players participating in the Tokyo Olympics are not.

Furthermore, Japan has a National Public Service Ethics Code that bans public officials from playing golf with stakeholders in the work. These rules were enacted in the latter half of the 1990s due to excessive hospitality being provided to public officials in the form of golf, yet despite the fact that public officials are permitted to dine with stakeholders in their work as long as they pay a reasonable share of the costs themselves, golf is not permitted even if a public official pays a reasonable share of the costs. There is no logical reason for golf being the only sport to be subject to such discriminatory treatment.

This double discrimination clearly infringes both Article 4 of the Olympic Charter, which stipulates "The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit," and Article 6, which stipulates "The

enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

I have asked questions about this issue on many occasions in the National Diet of Japan, and there are many ministers involved who agree with the abolition of the golf course usage tax. The Prime Minister Abe Shinzo has even responded to the questions I have asked him by saying he will look into abolishing the tax. However, absolutely no progress has been made towards reform due to the objection of local governments to whose finances the golf course usage tax contributes. As well as I, Vice President of the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) Kiichiro Matsumaru has pointed out that this tax violates the anti-discrimination stipulations of Articles 4 and 6 of the Fundamental Principles of Olympism, yet the government of Japan has made no attempt to rethink the situation. And perhaps being unable to stand by and do nothing, President of the International Golf Federation (IGF) Peter Dawson contacted Japan’s Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Koichi Hagiuda, Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Sanae Takaichi, and Minister for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games Seiko Hashimoto in writing on the 20th of September this year urging a rethink of the golf course usage tax and the National Public Service Ethics Code (see attachment).

In December 2016, the Japan Golf Council (headed by Eiko Oya) of which I am a member, sent you a letter. This letter pointed out that membership of the Kasumigaseki Country Club, which will be the venue for the golf event of the Tokyo Olympics, was limited to men and the current situation (at the time) discriminated against women, thus violating the anti-discrimination stipulations of the Olympic Charter. Under your leadership, the IOC subsequently urged that reforms be made, and in 2017 the problem of discrimination was solved when the Kasumigaseki Country Club changed its membership rules. I would once again like to express my appreciation for your wisdom and prompt response to this matter.

However, in order to ensure the success of next year’s Tokyo Olympics, there is still one matter of discrimination that must be resolved. The fact that this problem happens to be solely in the area of golf is not completely unrelated to the historical course that the sport of golf has taken in Japan, yet golf, which formally returned as an event at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics and for which there are high hopes for Japanese players at the Tokyo Olympics, has already secured its place as a sport beloved by citizens of Japan. If the Tokyo Olympics commence next year without addressing this issue, it will do so having ignored the spirit of the Olympic Charter that declares sport to be a human right and advocates equality in opportunity for sport, and this will leave a stain on the legacy of the games after they have finished.

I myself have tackled this problem for many years, and I now truly feel that no solution will be found if things are left to the hand of the Japanese government. Yet we still have time, so in order to ensure the

success of the Tokyo Olympics and leave behind a legacy that contributes to the development of the sport of golf, I would like to ask you, in firm collaboration with President Peter Dawson of the IGF.

I would appreciate it if you could provide me with your views on the current situation in which Japan's golf course usage tax and its National Public Service Ethics Code violate the Olympic Charter and have led to the existence of discrimination in the sport of golf.

In addition to this, I would also like to ask for your response to the letter that was sent to you in late October this year through the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games concerning a change of venue for the golf event in the Tokyo Olympics at the earliest possible date in order to deal with the problem of extreme heat.

Finally, please permit me once more to ask you for your strong support and leadership in the reform I have described here in your capacity as President of the IOC so that the sport of golf may achieve healthy development through the Tokyo Olympics.

Yours sincerely,

Shigefumi Matsuzawa

Member of the House of Councillors