

December 26, 2019

Open Letter

Dear President Thomas 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 Councillors in Japan—the host country of next year's Olympic Games. I recently sent you a letter about problems concerning the golf event of the Tokyo Olympics. Have you had a chance to read it?

Since I have not yet received your reply, I am sending it again as an open letter of questions. With the world's media also showing interest in this issue, I would very much appreciate it if you could provide me with your views on it as President of the IOC.

Question 1

Do you agree that the Japanese golf course usage tax infringes Articles 4 and 6 of the Olympic Charter's Fundamental Principles, and Article 1.4 of the IOC Code of Ethics?

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. In addition to this, Japan and South Korea are the only countries in the world that have a golf course usage tax.

Feeling guilty about this situation, the Japanese government has decided to make all golf players who take part in the Tokyo Olympics exempt from tax.

If things are left 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.

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."

It also infringes the stipulations of Article 1.4 of the IOC Code of Ethics, which provides to the same effect.

First, I would like to ask you for your views on this problem as the IOC President.

Question 2

If the above issue is not seen as a problem, do you agree that this will result in a double standard regarding the IOC's view on gender discrimination at golf venues?

In a National Diet session held in November 2016, I raised the issue of gender discrimination at golf venues. I 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 discriminated against women, thus violating the anti-discrimination stipulations of the Olympic Charter. This made the news, and under your leadership, the IOC subsequently urged that reforms be made, and the problem of discrimination was solved when the Kasumigaseki Country Club changed its membership rules. The club is now getting ready to serve as the Olympic golf venue.

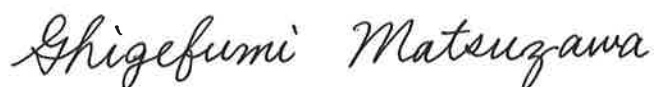
It is a double standard to ignore discrimination between sports or players while regarding gender discrimination as a problem, and this is not favorable for the IOC, as an organization obligated to uphold the principles on equality stipulated in the Olympic Charter.

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 in Japan, I would appreciate it if you could provide me with your views and understanding regarding the current situation, in which Japan's golf course usage tax violates the Olympic Charter and the IOC Code of Ethics, and has led to the existence of discrimination in the sport of golf.

Making judgments about whether the policies of an Olympic host country conform to the Olympic Charter's Fundamental Principles and the IOC Code of Ethics is a vital responsibility imposed only on the IOC. I believe that if the IOC expresses its views on the matter, the Japanese government will effect reforms accordingly.

With the eyes of the citizens of Japan and the world's media watching this issue, I would like to ask for your prompt reply.

Yours sincerely,



Shigefumi Matsuzawa

Member of the House of Councillors