

The President

**Mrs Christina Liebherr**

President  
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Dear Madam President,

Thank you for your letter of 15<sup>th</sup> November voicing the International Jumping Riders Club Board's position and proposal with regard to the Jumping format for the Olympic Games.

I also thank you for your reference to the Memorandum of Understanding that we signed some time ago as well as to the reference you made to the Olympic Charter and the role of the athletes in the Olympic Movement.

I would like to underline that the FEI fully endorses and applies the Olympic Charter and that we implement these principles in our governance structure and in our day to day operations.

We have offered many consultation opportunities to our National Federations (NFs) and stakeholders, and athletes, since 2014 and specifically and formally during the General Assemblies of 2014 and 2015 and the Sport Forums of 2015 and 2016. In addition, I kindly draw your attention to the fact that the Jumping Committee has one athlete representative, Mr Rodrigo Pessoa, directly elected amongst and by the athletes and additionally has another member, Mr Kamal Bahamdan, who is also an Olympic medalist and active rider. Furthermore, the athletes are also represented by Maria Gretzer on the FEI Executive Board and Bureau. I was therefore, surprised and disappointed to receive the IJRC letter only a week prior to the FEI General Assembly.

Nevertheless, I am happy out of respect for our athletes, to provide the following clarifications that have been established in consultation and together with Mr John Madden, FEI 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President and Chair of the FEI Jumping Committee.

When in your letter you refer to the number of Federations that are active in our sport, you discount the growth that our sport has shown over the last decades and you base your argumentation upon a static model that lacks ambition for growth and development. Let's not forget that we work here for the future and that success will inevitably bring opportunities, prosperity and a bright future for all. To achieve this, we need to create a new avenue for all

of our athletes and Federations to qualify for the Olympic Games and creating this avenue will mean they are provided with support by their National Olympic Committees and Governments.

Olympic Agenda 2020 states clearly that the evaluation of the Olympic Games will be based upon the assessment of events. Actually Jumping has two events: the team competition and individual competition. The parameters used to evaluate these events are essentially broadcast and media figures measured in all territories of the world. By limiting the number of teams to between 12 and 14, we will decrease the number of nations that will be interested in broadcasting this event. No broadcaster will cover an Olympic event that does not include athletes from its own country and we will also drastically reduce the size of interested audiences, another parameter measured in the evaluation process.

Besides this, I cannot see how we will be able to distribute a quota for only 12 to 14 teams over our National Federations taking into account parameters such as development and regional spread. In other words, I cannot see how we will be able to fulfil one of the most important IOC criteria which is universality.

A lot has been said in this debate about horse welfare. We strongly believe that the redefinition of the reserve combination as laid down in the FEI proposal is the best way to guarantee horse welfare. The concept of the reserve athlete combination that we introduce is an active reserve, unlike the situation today where the reserve can only be used until the beginning of the first competition. And, let's be honest, it does not change the existing practice that each team is trying to attain their best three out of four scores. By using an active reserve, teams have the ability to protect the welfare of the horse by competing with its best three out of four combinations.

We already made it very clear to the IOC that this active reserve is the corner stone of the proposed new format.

We disagree that maintaining a drop score would make the competition more exciting. With the new proposal, every result counts which will create excitement as it constantly impacts the results of the teams. Good luck and bad luck are part of the game. No successful sports have mechanisms in place to repair failure.

The risk of withdrawal or elimination of a team is covered by the fact that each result counts and no-one can predict each team member's result and, by introducing a maximum penalty, the sanction for a bad result is mitigated. Furthermore, since each team that advances to the second round starts equally with the score of zero, each have equal chances to win.

I thank you for referring to the experience of the Mexico 1968 Olympic Games, but I hope we can agree that our sport has evolved significantly since then.

In your letter it is often mentioned the importance of the highest quality of competition at the Olympic Games. I cannot imagine how this is possible to achieve with 12 to 14 teams given the required quota allocations.

Your reference to the European Division 1 of the FEI Nations Cup™ does not recognise the quality of this series which, I understood from many interventions received in this regard, is

incredibly important for our athletes and NFs. I believe the FEI Nations Cup™ Final, where 18 teams compete, has clearly demonstrated that more than 12 or 14 nations are up to the level.

Additionally, let's not forget that the Olympic Games require a team of four combinations (in our proposal, three combinations and an active reserve) every four years which cannot be compared to the horse power requirements of a series.

I hope that the answers provided will convince you of our unwavering commitment to consolidating our place in the Olympic Movement in the interest of the future of our sport.

Meanwhile, I remain,

Yours sincerely,



Ingmar De Vos

cc. National Federations  
Mr John Madden, Chair, FEI Jumping Committee  
Mrs Maria Gretzer, Chair, FEI Athletes Committee  
Mrs Sabrina Ibáñez, FEI Secretary General  
Mr John Roche, Director Jumping  
Mr Christian Baillet, President, Jumping Owners Club (JOC)