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The Lord Coe CH KBE
President, International Association
of Athletics Federations
6-8, Quai Antoine 1^{er}
BP 359 MC 98007
Monaco

Ref. *Proposal for Modification of London 2017 Women's 50K Race Walk Entry
Standard through Executive Board Action*

Dear Mr. President:

Further to the recent discussion of retaining the 50K race walk event as part of the Olympics and World Championships competition programs, I hereby propose a course of action that comports with the IAAF Constitution and Competition Rules, and helps foster gender equality within the spirit of Recommendation No. 11 of the IOC's Olympic Agenda 2020.

The Olympic Movement is very serious about eradicating any vestige of gender discrimination. The *Fundamental Principles of Olympism* set forth in the Olympic Charter provide that "every individual must have the possibility of practising sport without discrimination of any kind," such as sex discrimination. The mission of the IOC is to, *inter alia*, "act against any form of discrimination affecting the Olympic Movement" and "to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels ... with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women." (See Olympic Charter, *Fundamental Principles of Olympism* (4), (6); art. 2(6)-(7).) Fostering gender equality constitutes Recommendation No. 11 of the IOC's Implementation Plan of the 2020 Agenda. Specifically, the IOC must "work with the International Federations to achieve 50 per cent female participation in the Olympic Games and to stimulate women's

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participation and involvement in sport by creating more participation opportunities at the Olympic Games.” (IOC, Implementation Plan - 2016 and Beyond, p. 35.)

The same 2020 Agenda tasks the IOC to review the IAAF's Olympic event program for “gender balance analysis.” (Ibid.) Conducting such a review of our Olympic and Worlds athletic programs shows a glaring deficiency: men contest 24 events but women only 23. The difference: the 50K race walk. It is understandable, therefore, that Olympic officials have their eye on deleting the 50K in order to help balance the gender participation numbers, especially given the IOC's other aim of capping the number of athletes at the Olympics. But our athletics community should not have to suffer the deletion of any of its events, especially an event that had its first world record established back in 1895, the year before the first modern Olympics. (*Progression of IAAF World Records*, ed. by R. Hymans and I. Matrahazi (2015), p. 385.)

Simply put, the survival of the 50K depends on women walkers being given the same opportunity to contest the distance at the Olympics and World Championships. The IAAF under your leadership deserves great credit for recognizing 50K women's world records and for allowing women 50K-ers into the August London race.

But a gender issue still exists because the London women's 50K entry standard is the same as that for men, to wit: 4:06:00. (See *Qualification System and Entry Standards*, as approved by IAAF Council in March and November of 2016.) If the women's entry standards were the same as those of the men for the non-hurdle running events, only two female marathon runners would qualify for London but no other runners would. Imagine the 100 meters women without any participants, or the 200 meters, or the 400 meters etc.

Only a couple of women may claim to have qualified by meeting an alternate method of qualification (area champion; finishing position at designated competition; or reigning outdoor world champion). Susan Randall of the United States won the NACAC women's 50K title in Lima, Peru on May 14, 2017, ousting the first ever Area Champion in the event, Erin Taylor-Talcott, from her reign. Taylor-Talcott, however, was the top woman at last year's World Race Walking Team Championships 50K race in Rome.

The London entry standards provide that an athlete qualifies by having been in the top three at the Rome 50K race. (See Entry Standards.) Ostensibly, that mixed race was gender neutral in its classification. But rule 141 of the IAAF Competition Rules 2016-2017 provides that “[w]hen a Mixed Competition is organized outside the stadium, ... separate men's and women's classification results should still be declared or otherwise

indicated.” (Rule 141(4).) Any ambiguity is resolved by the Objects of the IAAF formulated in its Constitution: encourage athletics participation regardless of gender (art. 4(3)); to strive to ensure that no gender discrimination exists (art. 4(4)); and that all may participate in athletics regardless of their gender (art. 4(4)).

Of course, it would be awkward to enter two athletes in the race but omit others who posted even better times this year, as reflected in this year's IAAF women's leading performance list for the top twelve 50K walkers:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|------------------|
| 1. Inês Henriques (Portugal) | 4:08:26 | January 15, 2017 |
| 2. Yin Hang (China) | 4:22:22 | March 5, 2017 |
| 3. Katie Burnett (USA) | 4:26:37 | January 28, 2017 |
| 4. Shuqing Yang (China) | 4:27:24 | March 5, 2017 |
| 5. Erin Taylor-Talcott (USA) | 4:29:33 | January 28, 2017 |
| 6. Jiang Shanshan (China) | 4:32:14 | March 5, 2017 |
| 7. Lixue Wang (China) | 4:36:40 | March 5, 2017 |
| 8. Dan Wang (China) | 4:38:48 | March 5, 2017 |
| 9. Nair Da Rosa (Brazil) | 4:39:28 | May 14, 2017 |
| 10. Yoci Caballero (Peru) | 4:49:45 | May 14, 2017 |
| 11. Agnieszka Ellward (Poland) | 4:52:56 | March 25, 2017 |
| 12. Susan Randall (USA) | 4:54:12 | January 28, 2017 |

Each of these women deserves an opportunity to race the London 50K on August 13th. Each one of them has a rightful claim that having to meet the men's entry standard is contrary to the Objects of the IAAF Constitution. The entry standards were adopted by the Council in 2016, well before the January 15, 2017 world record performance by Inês Henriques; also before the sub-4:30:00 performances by two U.S. walkers on January 28, 2017; also before the sub-4:39:00 performances by five Chinese women on March 5, 2017; before the Dudince meet of March 25, 2017; and also before the two sub-4:50:00 walks at the NACAC Championship on May 14, 2017.

The Council will not meet again before the end of the qualification period on July 21, 2017. But the Executive Board is empowered to deal with any "urgent business that may arise." The Board may take decisions on the Council's behalf when necessary due to an urgency. (See IAAF Const., art. 9(2)-(3).) Of course, each Council Member has the obligation to respect the Objects set out in article 4 of the IAAF Constitution, an obligation enshrined in article 7(13(a)) of the same Constitution.

Two urgencies have arisen that allow the Executive Board to act now in the place of the Council: since the time the Council established the entry standards back in 2016, women have, this year, shattered world, Asian and American records at 50K, an abundance of empirical data that was not available to the Council last year; and a controversy about whether the 50K will survive surfaced in the last two months under pressure from Olympic officials, as evinced by the April 13 London Council vote.

I request that you convene the Executive Board as soon as possible to adjust the women's 50K standard to 4:55:00 to allow these twelve pioneering women to walk for a medal in London. The difference from male to female entry standards ranges from 11.26 % for the 100 meters (10.12 for men; 11.26 for women) to 18.70 % for the marathon (2:19:00 vs. 2:45:00). As the event distance grows, so does the percentage difference. The proposed 4:55:00 standard is 19.91 % greater than the men's standard. Hence, this proposal is gender neutral when compared to all the other running entry standards.

There is no downside to the proposed action. Having twelve women walk the long distance in London will inspire many to literally follow in their footsteps. Having these twelve walkers on the Mall this summer will be a great delight to the spectators lining the course, including young women who, watching these athletes, may dream of one day making the Olympics. Another advantage is the joint race concept of the London 50K. Having men and women contest a long distance race together may well be the wave of the future. It further helps the IOC keep the number of events down at the Olympics.

This year's events prove the point that making the distance available at the top will unleash the forces of participation at all lower levels. The IAAF started to recognize an official world record for the women's 50K on January 1, 2017. With the incentive of becoming a world record holder, it only took two weeks for Inês Henriques to set it in an exemplary fashion. The presence of U.S. and Chinese walkers in the top twelve list is no accident: both countries staged national women's 50K championships this year. Finding two South American women in the same list is no coincidence, either. Both earned those spots because the Pan American Race Walk Cup included a women's 50K.

Adjusting the women's 50K standard in time for London will put the IAAF in the vanguard of the quest for gender equality in sports. The new IAAF Constitution that goes into effect on January 1, 2019, will require gender parity on the Council. We should not have to wait until the Council attains gender neutrality to bring about needed change.

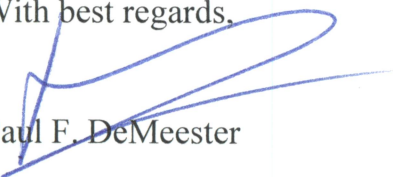
Your IAAF leadership has already resulted in the recognition of the women's world record, the admittance of a woman 50K walker in the Rome race last year, the potential inclusion of women 50K-ers at the Mall race this August; and the recent Council vote to retain the 50K.

It would be a fitting tribute to achieve this first for women in your home city; the city that gave birth to parliamentary democracy at the Houses of Parliament, a place you may call home as well; and the city where you spearheaded a splendid Olympics.

I look forward to learning your thoughts on the possibility of implementing this proposal so as to give these extraordinary athletes the opportunity they deserve.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

With best regards,



Paul F. DeMeester

cc: Executive Board
Council Members