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Dear President Coe and Members of the IAAF Council,

I congratulate the IAAF on a splendid World Championships. The stadium events provided thrilling contests and the Festival of Walks proved a great success, staged on the most beautiful venue imaginable.

I thank all of the Members of the Council for having given the seven women walkers the opportunity to race the 50km. All seven did us proud. The sole championship world record and two area records prove that women 50km walkers deserve to be part of the major competition programs.

Having immersed myself these past months in the gender equality aspects of the 50km race walk event and having served as legal counsel for two of the seven women 50km walkers, I offer my legal insights for future IAAF action with respect to this event.

Prior to the introduction of the constitutional gender equality requirement, the old method for determining whether to add a woman's event was to gauge whether the event was practiced by women in at least 35 countries on at least three continents, and having been contested in two world or continental championships. But the enactment of gender equality rendered that method invalid.

Ever since gender equality was enshrined in the IAAF Constitution, the Olympic Charter (2004) and the laws of Monaco (through its 2005 joinder of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women), the analytical question is no longer in how many countries the event is practiced and on how many continents. Instead, pursuant to gender equality principles, the question has become: *Is the event organized for men? If the answer is 'yes,' then gender equality requires the event to be organized for women as well as men.*

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Unfortunately, the July 23, 2017 IAAF Press Release indicates that the IAAF may still use the outdated method of analyzing whether to maintain the women's 50km at future events beyond London. I'm afraid that adherence to this outdated view, however well-intentioned, constitutes gender discrimination.

Olympic officials realized the tension between the then-new principle of gender equality and the old method of determining whether to add a women's event, and correctly dropped the latter rule (Rule 47 of the 2004 Olympic Charter) from the next edition of the Charter (2007).

The IAAF should follow suit and implement the constitutional mandate of gender equality by announcing that the 2018 IAAF Race Walking Team Championships include a women's 50km race walk event for which each member federation may enter up to five female athletes. The scores of the top three walkers from each member federation should be used for purposes of team scoring. Those walkers removed from the race for failure to meet a Time Limit at the end of their penultimate lap should be counted towards the team score, just as has been the case for the men (see Technical Regulations, reg. 707.7.1). The Time Limit for the women walkers should be no stricter than 5:15:00.

The change to the rules that the Council voted on in late July for purposes of the London Worlds with respect to regulation 102.2 of the Technical Regulations should be kept, as it is logical to define the 50km as an event for Men as well as for Women (the London change also deleted the 50km as a Mixed Event).

I hope that the IAAF will announce the Taicang 2018 women's 50km race walk event soon, so that women walkers may prepare to excel next May.

Thank you for your consideration.

With best regards,


Paul F. DeMeester

cc: Mr. Paul Hardy, IAAF Competition and Events Director
Members, Race Walk Committee
Mr. Luis Saladie