

OPEN LETTER TO A FRIEND

The International Olympic Committee will elect a new President on 16 July in Moscow during its 112th Session, to succeed my boss, Juan Antonio Samaranch. The 123 IOC members are eligible. The potential candidates must make themselves known to the President in office with a candidature countersigned by three IOC members no later than 10 April next.

We will therefore know who the official candidates are on 11 April. Each candidate will of course have a programme for the future to convince his or her colleagues and obtain their support. This is the first time that the IOC will hold this kind of election procedure. I remember the re-election of Avery Brundage in Mexico City in 1968, and the elections of Lord Killanin in Munich in 1972 and Juan Antonio Samaranch in Moscow in 1980, and his re-election thereafter.

In these modern times of unrelenting political campaigns, we do not know how the candidates to the IOC Presidency will proceed. It is well-known that politicians need financial backing to lead their campaigns. There are several different ways of fund-raising. Either the donors belong to the same political party, or they count on the candidate who, once elected, will return the favour. Businesses who support the candidatures of parliamentarians or senators do not do so simply because of the candidates' beautiful eyes. They expect a favour in return. This process is not considered as moral or financial corruption and is perfectly legal. There are even lobbying agencies -the most well-known ones have their head offices in Washington DC -that act as

by Fékrou Kidané



facilitators, on your behalf, with parliamentarians and senators on all kinds of matters. This procedure is also not considered as influence peddling. It is again perfectly legal.

For a member of parliament or senator to act on behalf of a citizen from his constituency, to help him obtain a study grant or a business favour is also perfectly legal. There is no conflict of interest.

Indeed, the Senator of the State of Utah, the capital of which is Salt Lake City, Orrin Hatch, said that his colleagues were asked every day to act on behalf of someone or other in relation to study grants or other services, and that everyone did their best in this respect. Several politicians also intervened on behalf of Salt Lake City's candidature. This is legal.

American senator John McCain, who dared to summon the IOC President to Washington during the Salt Lake City crisis, and who failed to be the Republican Party's candidate for the US presidential elections, like all the other candidates had raised funds for his campaign. This is legal.

But when the IOC sanctioned some of its members for ethical reasons and not for corruption, as some would

have liked, during the Salt Lake City crisis, and took the opportunity to enact reform, this was not enough for McCain. Everyone knows that the corruption system has existed since Antiquity, and it is notably politicians, businesses and their agents, that have globalized it, as they say in Davos.

Today, Senator McCain wants reforms of laws governing the financing of election campaigns because he has found irregularities that are not politically correct.

The question that should now be asked is how the candidates to the IOC Presidency can lead their campaigns and with what means. The candidate has the right to receive a gift with a market value not exceeding 200 US dollars. Since all candidates are from the same political party – the party of Olympism – they cannot count on, unlike politicians, receiving any financial assistance from the party or its militants.

At the IOC, it is the 122 members who vote and not the militants who are gathered within the National Olympic Committees (President Samaranch does not vote, out of personal choice). The campaign will thus amount to writing to each of their colleagues or meeting them to explain the programme of the candidature.

Since they must be independent according to their oath, the candidates are not supposed to receive the support of their government. They might receive the support of their National Olympic Committee and friends who could for example contribute up to the authorised amount of US\$200. After the deposit of the candidatures, should the IOC itself also

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allocate a certain amount to each candidate or cover their costs in some way to help them lead their campaign? Should the Ethics Commission, whose majority of members are Statesmen, consider the matter? You will agree with me that the IOC is a unique organization of its kind and that it is difficult to compare it with what is incomparable. All the better! That is what gives it its glory. The potential candidates have certainly defined their campaign policy and the way they are proceed. I am perhaps needlessly worrying about their lot! Yet I had to formulate the question, if only

to let those who give sermons know, that in this International Year of Volunteers, the candidates, who are Olympic volunteers, are not able to benefit, as politicians do, from financial support and that, in any case, the Olympic ethic – by which they abide – would not allow them.

Nevertheless, the voting will take place perfectly through an electronic voting system, after a conclusive rehearsal in Sydney. My colleague Thierry Sprunger, who has closely monitored the implementation of this system, will ensure that it runs smoothly. The President will certainly

appoint magistrates and lawyers to act as scrutineers. There will be no “chad” problem either, as was the case in Florida – because the IOC has known about Chad since 1964. And the result will be known immediately. The new IOC President will then take up office for a period of eight years, renewable only once for four years. The symbolic handing over of the keys to the IOC headquarters will take place on 20 July next in Lausanne and will mark the end of the Samaranch era, an era that will have been marked by the renewal and modernization of the Olympic Movement.

News

Senegal

The pioneer of Olympism in Senegal, Iba Mar Diop, Professor Emeritus and member of the IOC Medical Commission, was recently awarded the IOC Sport and Universality trophy by IOC vice-president Kéba Mbaye, who called it “a great distinction which goes to a great man. This is to reward the extraordinary career of an extraordinary man.” The ceremony took place at the Léopold Sédar Senghor stadium in Dakar, in

the presence of, among others, former Prime Minister Habib Thiam; Lamine Diack, IOC member and president of the International Amateur Athletics Federation; Françoise Zweifel, IOC Secretary General; Abdoulaye Seye Moreau, president of the International Basketball Federation; members of the board and management committee of the NOC; as well as numerous Senegalese athletes and champions.



(from l. to r.) Lamine Diack, Kéba Mbaye, Iba Mar Diop, Habib Thiam, Françoise Zweifel, Malik Sey and Tall Bouya Thiare.

Errata

In the special edition ‘Results of the Games of the XXVII Olympiad’, please note the following changes:

Football (page 42): for the women’s tournament, it should read ‘8-team tournament’ and not ‘16-team tournament’.

Weightlifting (page 48): in the ‘over 105kg’ category, Ashot Danielyan (Armenia) was disqualified (positive doping test); Andrei

Chermikin (Russian Federation) becomes bronze medallist in this category.