

Helsinki, Finland, 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2021

## IFF Central Board meeting 3/2021 14.04.2021 over email

**Place:** Per Capsulam over email

**Schedule:** Wednesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<b>Participants:</b> Tomas Eriksson	<b>President</b>
Jörg Beer	
Monica Birdal	
Tamuz Hidir	
Calle Karlsson	
Stephen King	
Martin Klabere	
Carlos Lopez	
Agata Plechan	<b>ATC Chair</b>
Pakkamol Siritwat	
Filip Suman	<b>Vice President</b>
Kaarina Vuori	
John Liljelund	<b>Secretary General</b>
Stefan Kratz	<b>IFF Competition manager</b>

**Excused:**

## Minutes

### § 1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Eriksson opened the meeting at 09:00 CET and wished all members of the IFF CB welcome to the virtual per capsulam Central Board meeting.

### § 2. Approval of the agenda

Mr. Eriksson concluded that there are no changes or additions to the agenda.

**CB decided:** To approve the report

### § 3. Cancellation of the Women's WFC 2021 qualifications

Mr. Eriksson explained that the continued problematic Covid-19 situation all over the World and the uncertainty or reduced possibilities for the registered teams to participate in the Women's WFC Qualifications 2021 has increased together with the extra costs related to a participation.

The IFF Competition office has during the last weeks made inquiries to the participants of the WFCQ 2021 and there is an alarming number of teams which are not in position to participate in the WFCQ's. In addition to this there is a certain uncertainty if the ones who have informed that

they can participate actually can do so in the end, due to travel and quarantine restrictions. There are already some teams informing that they will not be able to participate in the WFCQ's after only a week ago saying that they could participate. The outcome of that inquiry is presented in the table below. Out of the 25 teams registered for the qualifications a total of twelve have informed that they can't participate in the WFCQ's (**Appendix 1**). Out of the 13 that can five of these are the organisers of the qualifications. The Go/NoGo dates for the AOFC qualification have not yet passed but early inquiries already show that at least two countries will not participate.

Group	Host	Can participate	Cannot participate
EUR 1:	Latvia 15.-19.6.	LAT, FIN and RUS	BEL, NED and NOR
EUR 2:	Italy 25.-29.5.	ITA, FRA and SUI	GER, HUN and POL
EUR 3:	Slovakia 26.-30.6.	SVK, AUT, CZE and EST	DEN and ESP
AOFC:	Japan 29.6.-3.7.	JPN, SGP and THA	AUS and NZL
AMER:	Canada 11.-12.6.	-	CAN and USA

Therefore the IFF Competition Office started to prepare for possible changes in relation to no-participation of these teams and look upon how this might need changes in both the qualification groups and the number of teams qualified from each group. A proposal was sent to the IFF Rules & Competition Committee (RACC) for discussion and approval. After the proposal was sent more teams informed that they will not be able to participate and some comments upon the equality of the different qualification groups was raised by the RACC members.

Mr. Klabere reported that the RACC held a special meeting on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April to discuss the situation of the upcoming Women's WFC 2021 Qualifications in relation to Covid-19. Initially, the meeting was called to discuss how the qualification system would need to be changed, in the case of one or more events being cancelled, or groups being played with a reduced number of teams.

Based on the replies from the WFCQ participating teams, it became evident that to proceed with the qualification events was becoming increasingly difficult. In every country there is some level of restrictions that would affect participation – whether that be local regulations that limit the proper preparation of the team or testing and quarantine regulations when going to/from the event. The extra costs that could be incurred by a national association, especially in the case of a positive test while at the event, or a sudden change in Covid-19 regulations was also raised.

It was decided, after a thorough discussion, that the number of possibilities of what might happen in each qualification group, and how many teams would be able to participate, created too much uncertainty to be able to create any new qualification system that would be equal and fair to all involved.

For these reasons, it is the opinion of the IFF RACC that all qualification events for the Women's WFC 2021 be cancelled and the teams qualifying for the final round be decided by current rankings within each region.

The IFF Competition Office sent out an information letter to the organisers of the WFCQ, with the content of the RACC proposal. Latvia responded that they are all right with the proposal, but Italy responded that they are quite surprised to receive the news about this proposal and they are against this proposal. The Italian association expresses that they fully understand that it is very difficult to define new rules that would be fair for all when it comes to assigning the spots available for the WFC. They stress that the RACC proposal is even more unfair to just let the current ranking decide who will be given access to the WFC. Italy asks whether there would not be a possibility to elaborate with a mixed system, e.g. out of 10 European teams willing/able to play the qualifications receives 7 qualification spots for the WFC and out of 8 European teams

not willing/able to participate receives 4 qualification spots based upon their ranking (the numbers stated are only given as an example to clarify the idea behind this proposal).

The Italian association thinks that it would be important to hold the qualifications in order to:

- 1) give a positive signal to the entire floorball movement
- 2) give the teams a possibility to conquer a ticket to the WFC on the field

The Italian association further believes that it is possible to hold the event in a safe way, as a lot of hard work has been done by the LOCs to organise the events in the best way. In addition agreements have already been made with sponsors and media and it will be difficult to exit the agreements in a smooth way. In case any LOC is having problems to hold the event in a safe way we also offer our availability to host up to 8 teams inside the Bella Italia EFA Village “bubble” in Lignano Sabbiadoro if that can be of any help.

Mr. Kratz explained that to have a fair and even qualification for the Final round, there must be more teams which can participate in the qualifications than we have today. With the present situation and the uncertainty if the teams having said yes can actually in the end participate, too much is left up for chance and we would not know until the qualification would actually be played how many teams could qualify from each group, based on participation. Therefore, the IFF Competition office still supports the RACC proposal to cancel the qualifications, regardless the comments and proposals received from Italy. It is important to recognise that the Italian offer to host 8 teams is a great one, except it unfortunately does not solve the problems teams face with preparing for the event and the uncertainty of traveling to/from Italy. Also, they are unable to hold the event at any later dates than in May.

Mr Klabere explained that RACC made a thorough summary of the pros and cons of all the alternatives. But to leave the qualification of teams to be based on the respective national Covid-19 rules and the rules of the organiser country together with the extremely high financial aspects for some countries in the end would be unfair if you look at the tournament as such. We are of course very thankful for the organisers that put in a lot of effort in planning the events and we realize the effects that this decision will have for the LOC's.

RACC also think that organisers made a very good pre-work in general in all qualifications and that the 'bubble' that Italy made had been the safest possible an organiser could fix within floorball.

Mr. Eriksson concluded that it is very unfortunate that the Covid-19 pandemic is causing continued issues for all of sport to arrange and hold Events as planned. It is still the responsibility of IFF to see to the safety of the athletes and keep the qualifications fair, in order to maintain the level of the Women's WFC 2021 final round. Mr. Liljelund expressed that the matter has been carefully discussed in the IFF Office and now in the IFF RACC and it seems that the only reasonable thing to do now, is to unfortunately cancel all the qualifications. It is maybe, at this time, more important that all the resources and efforts of the IFF member associations are being directed towards a return back to Floorball, instead of the qualifications in this instance.

Mr. Eriksson proposed based on the recommendation of the IFF RACC to cancel all the Women's WFC 2021 qualifications and to decide that the teams qualified for the WFC 2021 will be based on the current ranking. Mr. Eriksson further wanted to convey the IFF CB gratitude to the WFCQ organisers for their excellent work to prepare for the qualifications, which will not now be played.

Mr. Houman felt that it is not an easy situation for the IFF. It is essential that the WFC is held, with the participation of 16 teams and that the member associations are not financially challenged. There are huge financial risks related, if one or more players will be tested positive, the team will be put under quarantine when arriving or returning from the event and there are not

such insurances available to an affordable price which the member associations could pay for. Based on these risks Mr. Houman informed that he is in favor of cancelling the qualifications.

Mr. Suman stressed that IFF unfortunately must be ready to face complications also in the other tournaments this year, as there is a risk that both adult and U19 WFCs will be somehow affected. As Mr. Houman mentioned that the Covid-19 issues will raise extra financial risks for the federations and some risks for the players. But in the sake of floorball, we have to ensure that these events will simply be played, even if in a different format.

Ms. Vuori felt that It is sad that we can't play, but in the current situation it feels that this is the only possible solution. Like many have commented, it is important to ensure the safety of the players and take in consideration the possible financial effects for the members. It would be really important for our sport to be able to play at least the Adult WFC's this year, taking all safety issues in consideration. It looks like more and more sports are playing their events safely despite the Covid-19, with modifications and new procedures.

What comes to the possible extra financial effects for participants, this can become a big challenge. Could IFF somehow advice or support the participating teams/associations to apply for financial support due to Covid-19 from their ministries or other foundations?

Mr. King believes that IFF needs to be leader in our sport on not just start playing again but also securing the safety of our players and the financial position of our members. This is a hard balance to achieve, but this proposal is the correct balance and the fairest option to determine who plays at the WFC in the current difficult and varied circumstances that our members face today.

The other CB members were all in favor of the RACC proposal, despite the very difficult situation.

Mr. Eriksson concluded that as many of the CB members have mentioned and stressed it is first and foremost the CB's duty to take care of the safety and wellbeing of all players and officials, hence with all uncertainty with Covid-19, it leaves us with the only option to cancel the WFCQ, however sad it is. Floorball has been a role model for many other International Federations handling these situations with crystal clear Go/no-go dates etc. being on top of external and internal information to associations, being in contact with the respective LOC's. Mr. Erikson would like to convey big thanks to the IFF office and to all bodies in IFF the RACC for a professional and prompt and swift handling leading up to this proposal.

**CB decided:** To Cancel all of the WFC 2021 qualifications and that the teams for the WFC 2021 Final round will be based on current rankings within each region.

The qualified teams are **EUR:** Switzerland, Finland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Latvia, Germany, Norway, Denmark, Estonia and Russia; **AOFC:** Australia, Japan and Singapore and **AMERICAS:** USA

#### § 4. Closing of the meeting

Mr. Eriksson closed the meeting at 09:05.

**John Liljelund**  
Secretary General

**Tomas Eriksson**  
President