To: All Media
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Place: Lausanne

Team of Refugee Olympic Athletes (ROA) created by the IOC

The Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) today created a team of Refugee Olympic Athletes for the Olympic Games Rio 2016. It will be treated at the Olympic Games like all the other teams of the 206 National Olympic Committees (NOCs).

The EB also approved the operational aspects surrounding Team ROA.

- The name of the team will be Team Refugee Olympic Athletes;
- The Team ROA will get their own welcome ceremony at the Olympic Village, as all other teams;
- The team will be housed as all the other teams;
- A team entourage will be appointed by the IOC to meet all the required technical needs of the athletes, including: chef de mission, coaches and technical officials (as per official quotas);
- The team uniforms will be provided by the IOC;
- For all official representations of the team (including possible medal ceremonies), the Olympic Flag will be raised and the Olympic Anthem will be played;
- The team will march behind the Olympic Flag before the host team Brazil at the Opening Ceremony;
- An adequate insurance policy will be contracted;
- A proper doping control process will be introduced through the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA); and
- Olympic Solidarity will cover travel and other participation expenses for the team and will continue to support the athletes of the team after the Olympic Games.

As part of the IOC’s pledge to aid potential elite athletes affected by the worldwide refugee crisis, the NOCs were asked to identify any refugee athlete with the potential to qualify for the Olympic Games Rio 2016. Such candidates could then receive funding from Olympic Solidarity to assist with their preparations and qualification efforts.

Forty-three promising candidatures have been identified, whom the IOC is now assisting. In view of the complexity of the process and in order to allow sufficient time to finalise and consolidate all the necessary information about these candidates, the EB decided today to
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close the call for new candidatures. Only under exceptional circumstances requiring the approval of the IOC President will new candidates be considered.

“By welcoming the team of Refugee Olympic Athletes to the Olympic Games Rio 2016, we want to send a message of hope for all refugees in our world,” said IOC President Thomas Bach. “Having no national team to belong to, having no flag to march behind, having no national anthem to be played, these refugee athletes will be welcomed to the Olympic Games with the Olympic flag and with the Olympic anthem. They will have a home together with all the other 11,000 athletes from 206 National Olympic Committees in the Olympic Village.”

The ROA team for Rio 2016 is expected to number between five and ten athletes. The participating athletes and the other members of the ROA team will be named by the IOC Executive Board at its next meeting in June this year. The nomination criteria includes the sporting level, the official refugee status verified by the United Nations, and the personal situation and background.

Following the approval of Olympic Agenda 2020, the IOC’s strategic roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement, and in light of the current global refugee crisis, the IOC created a special fund of USD 2 million to develop relief projects through sport in collaboration with NOCs around the world.

Over 15 NOCs have already made use of this fund. Details of some of the projects under way can be found here and here.

The IOC already works with a number of United Nations agencies to help refugees around the world. For the last 20 years, the IOC and UNHCR in particular have been using sport to support healing and development among young refugees in many camps and settlements around the world. They have consequently seen thousands of refugees benefit from sports programmes and equipment donated by the IOC.

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The International Olympic Committee is a not-for-profit independent international organisation made up of volunteers, which is committed to building a better world through sport. It redistributes more than 90 per cent of its income to the wider sporting movement, which means that every day the equivalent of USD 3.25 million goes to help athletes and sports organisations at all levels around the world.

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