The International Olympic Committee (IOC) OFFERS THE FOLLOWING VIDEO NEWS RELEASE TO ALL NEWS AGENCIES, BROADCASTERS AND ALL ONLINE PLATFORMS FREE OF CHARGE

Story Headline: Former Olympians depart IOC headquarters on 18,000 kilometer cycle back to their homes in New Zealand.

Location: IOC Headquarters, Lausanne, Switzerland

Date: 30th April 2018

STORY SCRIPT

Olympians Emma Twigg and Rebecca Wardell have been joined by fellow New Zealander Sarah Van Ballekom on the biggest challenge of their careers - described by International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach as “the true Olympic Spirit”.

All three women have been working at IOC headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, but have quit their jobs to head back to New Zealand - on bikes.

They began their 18,000km journey today (April, 30) and were waved off by IOC President Thomas Bach. They expect to take a year to reach New Zealand, as they pass through Europe, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, China and South East Asia before the final trek down the length of New Zealand.

On their adventure they are hoping to connect with as many Olympians as possible and will go into schools to help promote Olympic ideals.
Bach said: “It is the true Olympic spirit. It is a great athletic performance, and through this athletic performance and using this athletic performance to promote the Olympic values by meeting so many people, this is the best Olympics we can offer.

“I am extremely proud and happy for them that they can undertake such a tour in the true Olympic spirit and I really wish them all the very best.”

Single sculler Twigg, 31, who represented New Zealand in Beijing, London and Rio, said: “The trip was born a few years ago when Rebecca and I were out riding and I suggested that she should ride back to New Zealand, and it just happens that the three of us are now in a position to do it together, and what better way than to do it with two great mates and make a real adventure of it.”

Wardell, 40, who represented New Zealand in the heptathlon in Beijing, said: “It started just as a massive adventure. Let’s see if we can cycle from Switzerland to New Zealand. Then it became more about us connecting with people along the way, connecting with Olympians, and also raising money for aspiring young sporting women back in New Zealand.”

29-year-old Van Ballekom is a former New Zealand Universities rower. She said: “I’m joining two amazing Olympians Emma and Becs. I call myself the fan girl of the group. The idea is that we’re going to go into a lot of schools and connect with local Olympians in every country. Go in and speak to some kids
and get them inspired, kick a ball around and donate some sports equipment in the schools that we go and visit.”

The three women are aiming to raise $1US per kilometre of their journey to help young sportswomen in New Zealand at the start of their careers.

Follow them on their long way home: [http://www.thelongwayhome.co.nz/](http://www.thelongwayhome.co.nz/)

ENDS