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STORY HEADLINE: International Olympic Committee strengthens support for Ukraine Olympic community as IOC President Bach joins Ukrainian Minister for Youth & Sport on visit to athletes

LOCATION: Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) World Cycling Centre, Aigle, Switzerland & Olympic House, Lausanne, Switzerland
DATE: 21st April 2022
LANGUAGE: English & Ukrainian

STORY SCRIPT:
International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach and Ukrainian Minister for Youth and Sport Vadym Guttsait have visited Ukrainian athletes living and training in Switzerland.

President Bach and Minister Guttsait, both Olympic champions in fencing, were joined at the UCI World Cycling Centre in Aigle, Switzerland, by Sergii Bubka, Olympic Champion, IOC Member & President of the NOC of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian athletes currently training abroad have not returned home following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army, supported by Belarus, on 24 February 2022. Since the start of the war, the IOC has led the solidarity efforts of the Olympic Movement to help the Olympic Community in Ukraine. The IOC has set up a Solidarity Fund and provided – together with Olympic Solidarity – USD 1 million. The European Olympic Committees (EOC) has provided funding of USD 0.5 million. With the donations received from Olympic Movement stakeholders, this fund now totals over USD 2 million and is currently being distributed.

The efforts of the IOC and the Olympic Movement are being coordinated by a task force, which is led by Sergii Bubka. The support aims at enabling Ukrainian athletes to continue taking part in international competitions. It takes the form not just of financial aid, but also logistical support, travel support, offering training facilities, accommodation, equipment and uniforms, amongst other things.

On Thursday, IOC President Bach, Minister Guttsait and NOC President Bubka went to the World Cycling Centre (WCC) in Aigle, Switzerland, where they were welcomed by the President of UCI and IOC Member in France, David Lappartient. They watched BMX and track cycling training sessions and met 30 BMX, track and mountain bike athletes. Three of
them are currently training at the WCC, while 27 others have been evacuated by Swiss Cycling and are currently training and residing in the Swiss National Centre.

It is not just Ukrainian athletes who are preparing for competitions in Aigle and using the World Cycling Centre as their base – cyclists from Afghanistan are also being hosted here. Samira Asghari, IOC Member in Afghanistan, joined the IOC President and the Ukrainian delegation during their visit to 24 road discipline athletes who have joined the WCC following the humanitarian crisis in their country and have been given the chance to build a new life in Switzerland.

The support the IOC is extending to the Olympic Community in Ukraine is not unique, but similar to the support extended to other members of the global Olympic Community. It is based on solidarity, one of the fundamental values for which the Olympic Movement stands.

Minister Guttsait informed the IOC President about the Ukrainian proposal to all stakeholders in the sporting sector that they become sponsors of the re-birth of sports clubs and sports infrastructure in Ukraine after the war is over. “This is a great initiative. The IOC is fully supportive of this project,” said the IOC President.

Minister Guttsait thanked the IOC President for this offer: “This is a continuation of the strong and fruitful cooperation between the IOC and Ukraine over the years,” he said. Just last September, the IOC President visited the country to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the NOC of Ukraine. On this occasion, the IOC President also met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and received the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise.

President Bach, Minister Guttsait and NOC President Bubka also discussed the unfolding situation in Ukraine during a meeting at Olympic House in Lausanne.

The IOC had, in consultation with Ukrainian NOC President Sergii Bubka, immediately condemned the war and the breach of the Olympic Truce when the Russian invasion of Ukraine started on 24 February 2022. At that time already, the IOC urged all International Sports Federations (IFs) not to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials to take part in international competitions, to ensure the integrity and fairness of the global competition. It also recommended to the IFs to relocate all planned competitions from Russia and Belarus. In addition, a number of members of the Russian government, including the President of the Russian Federation, were sanctioned for breaching the Olympic Truce.

The IOC also suspended the tender process for the media rights sales for the territories of Belarus and the Russian Federation for Milano Cortina 2026 and Los Angeles 2028.

The Ukrainian Sports Minister welcomed this strong message from the IOC and the fact that the vast majority of IFs are following the IOC recommendations.

The IOC President, Minister Guttsait and Sergii Bubka also discussed calls for further sanctions in the sporting sector. The IOC President made it clear that the IOC supports sanctions against anybody in the Olympic Community who is in support of the war, and
continues to monitor the situation. He also reaffirmed that, naturally, the Olympic Movement respects the measures being taken by respective governments.

**SHOT LOG:**
00:02 Exterior UCI World Cycling Centre
00:07 Olympic Flag and Ukraine Flag flying side-by-side
00:12 Olympic Flag and Ukraine Flag flying side-by-side outside UCI WCC
00:17 IOC President Thomas Bach leads delegation leaving UCI WCC
00:21 BMX training session on UCI WCC BMX track with Ukrainian riders
00:29 Delegation meets Ukrainian riders
00:36 IOC President Thomas Bach and delegation head back to World Cycling Centre
00:41 Sergii Bubka (nearest camera) and rest of delegation watch Track training session in the UCI WCC with Ukrainian riders
00:47 Ukrainian riders during training session in velodrome
00:58 Delegation meets Ukrainian riders. Sergii Bubka and President Bach comfort members of the squad
01:16 Training shot of Ukrainian riders on track
01:20 Delegation meet Afghani riders
01:35 Photo with all the Ukrainian athletes, coaches and the Ukraine Team Car
01:39 UCI officially hands over the key of the Ukraine team car to the Ukraine Cycling Federation
01:44 Photo with riders and officials of Ukraine Cycling Team and Afghanistan Cycling Team

Question: How did it feel seeing Ukrainian athletes being able to live and train here in Aigle?
**01:56 SOUNDbite: Thomas Bach, IOC President, Olympic Champion (English Language)**
"That's a very emotional moment to see these young people, most of them being here without their families, having to flee from their country and not sure about their parents, their families, their friends. That's really heartbreaking to see. And on the other hand they are also to realise the strength sport is giving them to overcome this situation. And therefore I think it was very important for us to make this experience."

Question: How significant has the support of The Olympic Community been to Ukrainians?
**02:44 SOUNDbite: Thomas Bach, IOC President, Olympic Champion (English Language)**
"There it is an expression of our Olympic solidarity. It is not for nothing that we have changed the Olympic motto to faster, higher, stronger together. And we show with our solidarity efforts that we are together. And we are very satisfied that the young people, the young athletes, their families, and also the Ukrainian Olympic Committee and the Ukrainian government, are appreciating this support."

Question: How important was the visit of the Ukrainian Minister of Sport?
**03:28 SOUNDbite: Thomas Bach, IOC President, Olympic Champion (English Language)**
"His presence here was a demonstration of the close cooperation and the solidarity we are sharing with the Ukrainian people and with the Ukrainian Olympic community and there the closer cooperation between our task force chaired by Sergii Bubka, as a member of the
IOC in Ukraine and President of the National Olympic Committee and the Sports Ministry is key. And there we could see how closely the two are working together to make these efforts as efficient as possible. To see here all the athletes being - under the circumstances - satisfied, and even happy I think was a great reward for the two of them but also for us to see that our support is arriving at the people. That there is nothing in between - it’s the athletes and their communities who are benefiting from this solidarity effort and this is what it should be."

Question: How do you feel seeing Ukrainian athletes able to live and train here in Aigle?

04:56 SOUNDBITE: Sergii Bubka, IOC Member & President of the NOC of Ukraine, Olympic Champion (Ukrainian Language)

"It’s a very pleasant thing to be here today in this wonderful unique centre that prepares cyclists, and we are very happy that Ukrainian sportsmen have today the possibility to prepare themselves, train and protect Ukraine on the world’s arenas. That’s why it’s a big event for me to be able to meet boys and girls, express support to them and wish them victory in the name of Ukraine."

Question: How important is the support of the sport community while there is a war in Ukraine?

05:29 SOUNDBITE: Sergii Bubka, IOC Member & President of the NOC of Ukraine, Olympic Champion (Ukrainian Language)

“You know even today it’s very hard to believe that this happens on Ukrainian land, that it’s war now in Ukraine and our armed forces are protecting our state. I’m very pleased that the International Olympic Committee, all Olympic communities of the world, and the sports world are supporting Ukrainians today. It’s helping Olympic and Ukrainian sports to stand this big pressure and challenge and to win this war. Our sportsmen do everything to get victories and make Ukraine proud."

Question: How do you see this support from the Olympic movement to Ukrainian sports?

06:21 SOUNDBITE: Vadym Guttsait, Ukrainian Youth and Sport Minister, Olympic Champion (Ukrainian Language)

“First of all I want to thank all the Olympic family, the International Olympic Committee, the President Thomas Bach for all this support in such a difficult time for our Motherland. We are having a difficult time, but all the Olympic family, all the world, is with us and the [International] Olympic Committee is helping us and our sportsmen and because our sportsmen, well many of them, are in different countries there was a fund of support created that was directed and co-ordinated by our director of the National Olympic Committee Sergii Bubka and we are working on providing our athletes with comfortable conditions so that they are able to prepare for the competitions and take part in them. That’s why I would like to express my gratitude for the support of the international community and the International Olympic Committee. It’s very important for us. We are going to feel this and remember this forever.

Second, it’s very important that starting from the first day there were sanctions provided against the aggressor countries, against the Russian Federation and Belarus for that war, for what is happening now in our country. We see that because of the sanctions Russian and Belarusian sportsmen were removed completely and do not take part in the competitions."

Question: How has your experience been at the cycling centre so far?
07:36 SOUNDBITE: Arina Korotieieva, Ukrainian Cyclist (Ukrainian Language)
“We are here thanks to the cycling UCI and Swiss Cycling, and have been here from the start of March. We are living in the Olympic Centre.”

Question: How important is the Olympic community support for you?
08:07 SOUNDBITE: Kateryna Badiak, Ukrainian athlete (Ukrainian Language)
“I consider the support to be very important because we need not only psychological support but financial too, although it might sound out of place. We are the athletes and we need sports equipment and living conditions. All this we have thanks to the Swiss Cycling Federation.”

Question: How important is it for Ukrainian athletes to be able to continue competing?
08:36 SOUNDBITE: Kateryna Badiak, Ukrainian athlete (Ukrainian Language)
“It’s very important for us to compete now, because competition is the best training for us, we cannot interrupt this process as we are the athletes.”

08:54 Aerial of Olympic House, Lausanne
09:00 Artem Rybchenko, Ambassador of Ukraine to the Swiss Confederation, Sergii Bubka and Vadym Guttsait pose alongside statue of Baron Pierre de Coubertin at Olympic House
09:05 Sergii Bubka and Vadym Guttsait walk through Olympic House
09:08 IOC President Thomas Bach greets Vadym Guttsait in his office
09:13 President Bach, Sergii Bubka and Vadym Guttsait in the President’s Office
09:22 President Bach, Sergii Bubka and Vadym Guttsait pose for official photograph
09:25 Wide move out of office as President Bach, Sergii Bubka and Vadym Guttsaitt continue talking

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