

Introduction:

RG. *The IHF has confirmed all the arguments and positions which were the reasons of my resignation. I'll reply to each of the different points and topics.*

1- According to the usual practice and in compliance with Articles 19.6.4 and 19.6.8 of the IHF Statutes, the IHF Commission of Organising and Competition (COC) and IHF Playing Rules and Referees Commission (PRC) submit their proposed nominations of officials and referees for upcoming IHF events to the IHF Executive Committee for approval, considering that the Executive Committee has the right to request changes to the nominations, if applicable. Afterwards, the PRC Chairman is free to appoint the referee couples for the respective matches of the IHF events concerned.

RG. *Yes, the IHF Executive has the right to approve the global nominations of referees for an IHF event, but the referee's daily nominations for each match in the event are a total responsibility of the PRC Chairman.*

2- In his capacity as Chairman of the Executive Committee, IHF President Dr Hassan Moustafa informed and advised the PRC Chairman on several occasions not to engage referee couples from the same regions to officiate matches of the teams concerned, aiming not only to guarantee neutrality (despite the IHF's trust in the neutrality of all IHF referees), but also to avoid any criticism, complaints or arguments for the referees and/or the IHF. The instruction was not limited to a particular region, as for example the PRC Chairman was advised not to nominate Arab referees for any matches of Arab teams, mainly to protect the referees from being criticised by the public or media after the match despite their neutrality throughout the match. Moreover, engaging referee couples from the same region could lead to advantages for one team speaking the same language.

The nomination of a Norwegian referee couple for the Preliminary Round match Sweden versus Egypt, played on 18 January 2021 during the IHF Men's World Championship in Egypt, was highly criticised by the public as well as the media. Therefore, the IHF approached the PRC Chairman to remind him again to consider the aforementioned instruction, which he disregarded once again by appointing the Danish referee couple for the match Norway versus Romania, played on 20 March 2021 during the IHF Women's Olympic Qualification Tournament in Montenegro. The President of the Romanian Handball Federation, by official letter dated 29 March 2021, complained to the IHF about the above-mentioned referee nomination. He stated, among others, that "the delegation of a couple of referees from Denmark to a game in which one of the teams is Norway was uninspired and unfortunate."

RG. *IHF is confirming the criteria that I wrote as unacceptable in my letter, that makes that any kind non-sporting criteria can influence in nominations. The affirmation that the IHF trust the neutrality of all IHF referees is contradictory with the other statement that there will*

be additional limitations for nominations. These additional limitation in only giving the message that the referees could be not neutral in all cases.

Moreover, the concept "region" doesn't exist in the IHF Regulations. Accepting this criterion would be the recognition that the IHF referees are not neutral and whistle in favor of the team with their same region.

We could say the same for the criteria of language. The language of the teams vs the native language of the referees can't never be a excluding reason for a nomination. Would be also the language of the coaches, players, team officials etc. another reason for this exclusion? The common sense says no.

The IHF referees are honest and independent, they are only judges and nobody can put it in doubt. They should be allowed to whistle any kind of matches/teams except when his own national team is playing.

In the Men's World Championship EGY2021 there were no spectators, just the IHF guests and some voluntaries, then no sense to speak about the high critics of the public.

I believe that the complaint of the President of a national federation cannot be the reason to challenge the referee's honesty. This door should be closed forever. If the IHF President considers the complaint from a related party of a match, is putting in danger the overall concept of referee's integrity. Under that criteria every team losing a match would have an opportunity to influence in future referee's nominations.

In the same WCh EGY2021, there were more "regional nominations" or for referees with the same language of any of the teams, i.e. couples from Europe, America, Africa and Asia were refereeing matches for the same "region", and nobody made any complaint. Nobody doubted the referee's performances. It looks like that the only relevant match was SWE-EGY

3- During the match Argentina versus Spain, played on 21 March 2021 as part of the IHF Women's Olympic Qualification Tournament in Spain, which was officiated by the Uruguayan referee couple and attended, among others, by the Spanish Minister of Sports, several decisions taken by the referees were criticised by the attendees.

RG. *The fact that attendees of a match criticized some referee's decisions is not a reason to state that these referees showed lack of fundamentals in terms of refereeing, which could have led to a catastrophe. These referees demonstrate largely their quality in previous events, i.e. when the were nominated for the final match of the Junior Women's World Championship HUN 2018 and the good performance in a senior Women's WCh in Kumamoto 2019.*

4- In the finals of major IHF events, the PRC Chairman used to consult with the COC Chairman on the nomination of the referees. However, at the 2021 IHF Men's World Championship in Egypt, the PRC Chairman decided, without any consultation, to appoint the Spanish referee couple to officiate the final match.

RG. *In the 1st paragraph of the IHF statement, is written that the PRC Chairman is free to appoint the referee couples for the respective matches of the IHF events concerned*

This statement regarding the COC Chairman is a bit odd, because he was not present at the World Ch EGY2021, because he was sick at home. Despite this fact, he was nominating the IHF Technical Delegates from home every day, and the referee's nominations were shared also daily with him in the same document, to be sent together to the IHF Office staff for publication. This happened every day, including the nomination for the final day. Then this IHF statement is totally false.

Since the day of the match SWE-EGY I informed every day to the President of the nominations, including the final weekend.

For the final day the two couples from CRO and ESP were pre-nominated for the gold and bronze matches, and the final decision would be depending on the teams concerned due to ESP was one of the teams qualified for semifinals.

5- According to the usual practice, the referee nominations for IHF events are limited to one couple per National Federation. However, the PRC Chairman insisted on nominating two referee couples from Spain for the 2021 IHF Men's World Championship in Egypt. Even after the remark from the IHF President to avoid nominating two couples from one National Federation to ensure diversity and a fair distribution among the National Federations, the PRC Chairman again proposed nominating two referee couples from Spain for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games despite the availability of further top-level IHF referees.

In March 2021, the IHF approached the PRC Chairman asking for his explanation about the aforementioned incidents. However, his input did not justify his above-mentioned decisions in terms of referee nominations.

RG. *Usual practice is not a rule, always the teams expect the best referees in the best events, no matter gender or nationalities, it's a simple question of quality and competence. If there are 2 very good couples from same country. Why 2 good couples from the same country can't be nominated?*

To say that the nominations of the referees must ensure diversity and fair distribution among national federations is opposite to the idea that only the high quality should be the reason for the nominations of the referees, like the teams that could win his own qualification. We could ask the participant teams in the OOGG or a WCh.

This "usual" practice was broken several times in the past, i.e. in the Men's WCh CRO2009 (2 couples from DEN) in the Men's WCh ESP2013 (2 couples from ESP) in the Men's WCh FRA2017 (2 couples from FRA) and in the Men's WCh EGY2019 there were nominated not only 2 couples from ESP but also 2 couples from FRA.

FIBA is the best example, they nominate 2-3 referees from same country for a FIBA event, decision well accepted for all teams.

6- Additionally, the PRC Chairman created a constant conflict with the European Handball Federation (EHF), which forced both IHF and EHF to convene mutual meetings to resolve the issues through mediation by their Presidents. Due to the PRC Chairman's differences with IHF PRC Member Dragan Nachevski, the PRC Chairman did not consider top-level IHF referee Gjorgji Nachevski (Dragan Nachevski's son) in his initial referee nominations for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic

Games. Afterwards, the PRC Chairman apologised for his inappropriate behaviour and nominated Gjorgji Nachevski for the mentioned event.

RG. The statement of this paragraph is false. I never created any conflict between the IHF and the EHF. My relationship with different counterparties in the EHF has been always excellent. The cooperation with the PRC member Dragan Nachevski is correct, we have worked together in so many IHF events in a very positive way. We may have some discrepancies in few aspects, like we may have with other PRC members, but nothing critical than can affect on the delivery of our work.

In December-2019 in Kumamoto the President asked for the nominations for the OQT and the OOGG-2020, I ask him to wait until the Men's Euro in January-2020 to assess the performances of the referees, but his order was to deliver the list immediately. I gave him my proposal and I explained that the couples included in the list were mainly based in the referee's ranking after the Men's WCh 2019. The IHF President approved the proposal where the couple Nachevski-Nikolov was not included.

In the Men's Euro 2020 the couple Nachevski-Nikolov made a good performance and whistled the final match. In February 2020 during the Council meeting in Cairo, both IHF and EHF Presidents asked me about this couple, I explained them the reason for their initial not nomination for the Olympic Games Qualifications Tournaments, but because of their good performance in the Euro, they would be added to the long list of possible nominees for Tokyo. Finally both competition the OGQT OOGG were postponed to 2021.

I never apologize for any unproper behavior, because this never happened and I didn't have to apologize for anything.

8- At the same time, the IHF thanks all IHF referees for their high-level performances at handball events and hopes to continue the good collaboration based on mutual trust.

RG. Finally, there is a paragraph in the IHF statement that I fully subscribe. I asked to the referees nominated for OOGG to keep a full focus in their preparation to reach the competition in the best possible shape and mental strength for the Olympics, where for sure they'll use their great quality and experience to achieve a big success in their performances, following the guidelines and advices that we have worked during the last 4 years.

RG. It's time to be all together behind the IHF referees nominated for Tokyo, then they'll be ready to fulfill the Olympic Oath,

"In the name of all the judges and officials, I promise that we shall officiate in these Olympic Games with complete impartiality, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them in the true spirit of sportsmanship."