

Dear Speakers of Parliaments,

May I personally bring to your attention the fact that on 10 March 2023, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania unanimously adopted a Resolution on Banning the Participation of Athletes from the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in the Olympic Games and Other International Competitions.

Only a few weeks ago, we marked the anniversary of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The 24th of February is a tragic day for Ukraine and for the entire civilised world. My hopes are that this commemoration of the anniversary of the brutal invasion was the last during this war.

In the meantime, however, we must do our utmost to ensure that Russia and Belarus can in no way circumvent the sanctions and finance this brutal war or use any loopholes to spread their toxic propaganda.

Regrettably, there are those who argue that sports and politics should not mix.

I find such arguments cynical amidst the ongoing war in Ukraine, where Ukrainian athletes, coaches and children are being killed daily by Russian missiles and bombs. There is not the slightest doubt that Russia and Belarus are using sports for their own propaganda purposes and that they will try to find ways to get back into the Olympic Movement and other international sports competitions.

Unfortunately, they do find such ways.

It is indeed a pity that the international sporting community, or even organisations such as the International Olympic Committee, still have to be persuaded that Russia must now be treated as a country that one can reach out to for a single purpose only, i.e. to summon to the international tribunal.

A clear position of national Parliaments on this issue is therefore of paramount importance, especially in the run-up to the Paris Olympics.

With this in mind, the Lithuanian Seimas adopted the respective Resolution, which invites and calls on the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee to remain committed to the principles and values of Olympism and to the principles it has itself adopted and refrain from inviting or allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials to participate in international competitions by extending this ban to the Olympic Games, without any reservations or further interpretations.

We, therefore, call on all the Parliaments around the world to express their unequivocal and firm opposition to any proposals, initiatives, projects or any other actions aimed at allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials to take part in the Olympic Games or any other international competitions, including under a neutral flag.

We take the view that the ban on the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes should be maintained until Russia ends its military aggression against Ukraine, withdraws its forces from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine, ensures accountability for the committed crime of aggression and war crimes, and makes full reparation for the damage inflicted on Ukraine, and until cooperation with Russia and Belarus under the rules-based international order becomes possible again.

For your information, please find attached the Resolution of the Seimas.

Yours sincerely,

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Speaker of the Seimas