

***NAIROBI, Kenya, September 15 (Infosplusgabon) - The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has directed its Kenyan affiliate, the National Olympic Committee of Kenya (NOCK) to conduct an all-inclusive, free and fair election on the agreed date of 29 September.***

In a letter to NOCK, dated 14 September, IOC Deputy Director and head of Relations and Olympic Solidarity, Pere Piro, asked the Kenyan authorities to ensure that no affiliate is left out of the polls.

Initially, the elections were set for 5May, but was postponed after the Kenya Taekwondo Association obtained an Interim Order from the High Court stopping the polls.

The association was one of the affiliates engulfed in leadership wrangles which NOCK wanted to lock out of the exercise.

The association has since withdrawn the matter from court, which technically gives NOCK the go-ahead to hold the elections.

The IOC also directed that any dispute that cannot be resolved by the Electoral Board, formed by an NGO which champions democracy - Centre for Multi Party (MMD), should be handled by the Elective General Assembly.

There is heightened interest in NOCK leadership, more so after what became known as the Rio Fiasco, which saw four NOCK officials who led the Kenyan team to the 2016 Olympic Games, arraigned in court facing theft and mismanagement charges.

Among the four were vice-president Ben Ekumbo and Paul Ochieng. Apart from the embezzlement of funds, the officials were also arraigned in court for stealing uniforms meant for athletes. They are all out on bond.

Police officers mounted a sting operation which saw them raid Ekumbo's house, where they retrieved uniforms and kits, some meant for the 2012 London Olympics.

Following the fiasco, the government moved in, Sports Cabinet Secretary Dr Hassan Wario, formed an interim committee, comprising federation officials to run NOCK, a move that IOC quashed.

NOCK said much as it supported the arrest and prosecution of errant individual NOCK officials, it was against the dissolution of the committee.

At any rate, NOCK's term was due to end on 31 May and there was the need to remove, a few months to the elections, IOC said.

The IOC does not recognize government-appointed national Olympic committees, which is a breach of the IOC constitution.

Outgoing NOCK chairman, Olympic medallist, Kipchoge Keino, has opted out of the race. He will not defend his seat during the elections, leaving former five-time World Cross Country champion, Paul Tergat, the sole aspirant for the seat.

Some aspirants have expressed fears that NOCK officials were handpicking delegates to the elections although it's federations that pick delegates.

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