



3 March 2020

**To: IRF National Federation Members**  
**From: Joseph Willis Jones – IRF President**

**For Immediate Release**

Dear Member Federation,

The IRF is continuing to closely monitor the Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak. It remains too early to tell what, if any, effect it will have on the 2020 IRF international rafting competition schedule, and in particular on our 2020 World Rafting Championship (WRC). As always, the health and safety of our rafting family will be our number one priority.

IRF Administration and Media representatives are receiving many requests for information from your teams and athletes about the effect the outbreak will have on the WRC. We are redirecting these information requests to you. It appears that misinformation has been spread stating that our 2020 WRC has been cancelled. This is **entirely false** and we ask you to please redistribute this letter to your athletes and anyone else concerned about our 2020 WRC. This notice will also be published on our website and social media outlets.

Since our last notice one month ago, the COVID-19 situation has changed tremendously. Some changes have been positive, while others have not. More is known about the virus, in particular that it has thus far resulted in mild symptoms for the vast majority of cases, and had its most serious effects on elderly persons and those with serious pre-existing health issues. Medical experts now believe that normally healthy individuals (like IRF athletes) will likely not experience serious effects if they become infected, however they warn that there are many unknown factors yet to be learned.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently released statements that the risk of the epidemic spreading is now very high at a global level. They report that in the last 24 hours there were almost 9 times more cases reported outside China than inside China, but there is evidence that containment is possible.

Taking a snapshot of today, 3 March 2020, the number of cases globally now exceeds 92,861 across 77 countries and territories, with at least 3,162 deaths reported. Today only 125 new cases were reported in China, a sharp drop from only a few days ago. The epidemics in the Republic of Korea, Italy, Iran and Japan are currently the WHO's greatest concern with more than 600 new cases today in South Korea, 542 in Iran and 523 in Italy.

Guangxi Province, China, site of the IRF 2020 WRC, has reported no new cases; and of the 252 people who have been infected, 210 people have completely recovered and only 40 remain infected. Guangxi is roughly the size of Italy in landmass and population and located more than 800km from the virus epicenter in Wuhan.

The virus has thus far wreaked havoc on the worldwide international sporting calendar and numerous events, including Olympic qualifiers, have been cancelled, postponed or relocated. However, today the International

Olympic Committee (IOC) has reiterated its commitment to holding this year's Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan as scheduled.

We encourage our athletes to continue to prepare for the IRF 2020 WRC, but be ready for any changes as the situation continues to develop. We also ask everyone to be aware that constantly changing travel restrictions may impact some of our events. We suggest that teams DO NOT purchase air tickets for the WRC at this time. The IRF will continue to follow advice from the WHO and Chinese officials.

We urge all members to stay up to date on the [latest WHO advisories](#). It is vital that athletes adhere to the advice of the WHO which includes avoiding close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections; engage in frequent hand washing; avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth; practice respiratory hygiene; and if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early.

To our members who live in countries or areas currently affected by the virus, we take this opportunity to express our heartfelt sympathy and support to those who have experienced suffering or loss. We wish you all the best during this difficult time.

Respectfully yours,



Joseph Willis Jones

**International Rafting Federation - President**

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