



PRESS RELEASE

“MPs URGE IPC TO LIFT BAN ON DISABLED ATHLETES ”

For immediate release

John Grogan MP, Douglas Alexander MP and Alex Johnstone MSP lead the way in supporting the lifting of the ban on athletes with learning disability.

The ban preventing athletes with learning disability (mental handicap) from competing in Paralympic level international sport remains as the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) gear up for their General Assembly on 24th November 2004.

Although conditions for re-entry to the Paralympic movement have been met by INAS-FID, the international body representing athletes with intellectual disability at world level, the IPC retain their ban on this group of athletes.

“I would urge the IPC to allow INAS to stay as a member and allow athletes with learning disability to compete at the next Games” writes Alex Johnstone MSP.

“I believe there is a strong case for reconsidering a ban”, writes John Grogan MP.

“I should be extremely grateful if the decision to exclude athletes with learning disabilities could be reconsidered to enable those in this category the opportunity to compete in the next games” writes Douglas Alexander MP.

“INAS has instituted a most rigorous registration procedure which has been tested and found to work by a joint INAS/IPC Verification Committee” comments Bernard Atha, President of both INAS Europe and The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability, *“I feel the case presented to IPC is conclusive and should lead to the ban on intellectually disabled athletes being lifted. Any continued ban would in my view constitute a breach of human rights legislation and the anti-discrimination laws now common in many countries and could lead to a series of legal challenges which could only damage the interests of all athletes with a disability”*.

The IPC General Assembly on 24th November, will debate whether INAS-FID should remain in IPC and consequently whether people with intellectual disability will have the right to compete in future Paralympic Games. Letters of support are being sought from Prime Ministers, International statesmen and women on the grounds of human rights legislation which is now common in many countries who are members of the IPC.

Less than 30 intellectually disabled athletes from around the world were permitted to take part in the Athens Games after considerable pressure was exerted by INAS-FID. Athletes were forced to take part in “exhibition events”, not entitling them to medal status despite their progress and achievement to Paralympic level.

The ban has ensued as a result of an incident at the Sydney Paralympic Games in 2000, where members of the Spanish basketball team cheated.

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For further information, contact Bernard Atha, President INAS-Europe & UK Sports Association on telephone 0113 2478328 or Tracey McCillen, UK Sports Association, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP. Tel: 0870 770 2464 Fax: 0870 770 2466 Email: info@uksportsassociation.org
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NOTES TO EDITOR

1. The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability is the national body that co-ordinates sport for people with learning disability in the UK and is the official GB representative on INAS-FID for athletes with learning disability.
2. INAS-FID is the Intellectual Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability. INAS-FID, founded in 1986, is the body seeking full and permanent membership of the International Paralympic Committee. INAS-FID is the world representative for athletes with intellectual disability. See further information at www.inas-fid.org
3. A full detailed report of the events leading pre and post the ban is available on the INAS-FID website at www.inas-fid.org together with details of the full submission to IPC.
4. Letters of support should be written to Jos Mulder, President, INAS-FID c/o The UK Sports Association, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP. Mr Mulder is based in The Netherlands.
5. Just 4 female, 8 male table tennis players and the male basketball teams of Greece and Portugal were permitted to take part in the Athens Games.