

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY

IWF



## IWF annual review 2020 background

### **End of year message from IWF Interim President Dr Michael Irani**

Frankly, 2020 has been a difficult year. 2021 promises to be better, but huge efforts will continue to have to be made to ensure this proves to be the case.

I do not propose to review everything that has happened at, and to, the IWF over the past year, since much of it was under the leadership of others. The past 10 weeks, however, have seen us call Constitutional and Electoral Congresses. We have extended our partnership with the ITA until 2024, and empowered it to investigate allegations made by Professor McLaren and by WADA.

We have created a Disciplinary and Ethics Committee composed of independent experts which is already almost operational. We have also added independent experts to the Reform and Governance Commission, including as chair. As that Commission presses ahead towards the 22 January deadline for the presentation of a new constitution and bylaws, it is making remarkable progress.

Consultations have been widespread and they will continue. Thank you to the 13 national federations who have contributed ideas. And thank you to those who have already completed the survey that you can also find [here](#). I would encourage you all to submit your ideas without further delay.

The athlete's voice will be key among those listened to, as will those who decide our Olympic fate. For me, the lowest point of this year as far as the IWF is concerned came when the IOC decided to heavily cut the proposed medals and places available for weightlifters at Paris 2024. Young weightlifters will have been deprived of opportunities through no fault of their own, but by the cheating and malfeasance of others. We must be determined to do better.

We should also be under no illusion as to the hard work that lies ahead and the obstacles we must overcome. For example, we must make arrangements so that the Congresses can take place regardless of travel restrictions. We will also need widespread cooperation. For example, Professor McLaren has yet to release the second part of his report to the ITA, the Disciplinary and Ethics Commission or the independent members of the Reform and Governance Commission, despite being asked to do so.

I am confident the obstacles can be overcome, despite the ambitious nature of the scope of work we have established and the deadlines we have set.

It is vital, too, that we move ahead with planning for the success of the remaining Olympic qualifying events and for the success of the weightlifting competition of the Olympic Games themselves. Tokyo 2020 clearly has the chance to serve as a shining beacon of hope and a true celebration of humanity. We owe it to our weightlifters to ensure the opportunities we provide them are worthy of their dedication.

Please allow me to take a moment to express my gratitude to you for the way you have continued to serve weightlifters, despite the hardships of this last year. You have shown great resilience and creativity in doing so, and I am sure your efforts will pay dividends in the form of strong performances at the competitions we all look forward to returning to.

Please allow me to also thank the IWF staff, who have continued to work steadfastly despite almost overwhelming difficulty.



For some of us, the deadlines we have set for reform mean a busy end of year. I do hope, however, that you all have the chance to enjoy some special time with your loved ones in the coming weeks. Please accept my very best wishes for a Happy New Year.

Dr Michael Irani

IWF Interim President

## Key Events

As with other sports, IWF's events calendar was devastated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic from March onwards in 2020. A few live events did take place before lockdowns were imposed around the world, while IWF responded to the crisis with an imaginative series of virtual competitions.

Major qualification events that were cancelled or postponed included: IWF Junior World Championships; European Championships; African Championships; Asian Championships; Pan-American Championships; and Oceania Senior and Junior Championships.

### Those events that were held included:

- Roma 2020 World Cup
- 5<sup>th</sup> International Fajr Cup
- 6<sup>th</sup> International Solidarity Championships
- Asian Junior Championships
- Asian Youth Championships
- West Asian Championships
- Malta International Open
- 39<sup>th</sup> Int Manuel Suarez In Memoriam
- 1<sup>st</sup> Online PanAm Cup LIVE by ZKC
- Uzbekistan International Cup
- Eleiko Email International Lifters Tournament
- 1<sup>st</sup> Online International Weightlifting Cup dedicated to the Independence Day of Uzbekistan
- Pan-American Masters Championships (Online)
- South American, Ibero-American & Colombian Senior Online Cups
- European Masters Online Virtual WL Championship
- IWF Online Youth World Cup
- Pan-American Junior Championships (Online)
- Nordic Weightlifting Senior Online Championships
- OWF Cup Online Tournament



## **VIRTUAL COMPETITIONS**

To compensate for the loss of competitions caused by the pandemic, an innovative series of virtual online tournaments took place around the world, in a modified round-robin mode.

Approximately 1,500 athletes participated in total, with roughly equal numbers of male and female athletes. The events were held under the IWF competition system, with competition rules respected, including the use of IWF International Technical Officials.

In some events, medals and diplomas were awarded for participation, while in others cash prizes were on offer.

Some examples were as follows:

### **IWF Online Youth World Cup**

Hosted by the Peruvian Weightlifting Federation, together with the IWF and the Peruvian Institute for Sport, the First IWF Online Youth World Cup comprised 400 athletes from 60 IWF Member Federations. A total of 60 medals were shared by athletes from 26 IWF Member Federations.

The IWF Online Youth World Cup closely replicated in-person competitions, with weightlifters around the world competing in real time against each other. Depending on their location, many weightlifters found themselves competing at challenging times of the day. But all welcomed the opportunity to test themselves against each other. The Peruvian hosts topped the medal table, with traditionally-strong IWF Member Federations being joined in the medals by relative newcomers.

Interim President Irani said: “The pandemic may have made it impossible to host full international competitions in weightlifting for the time being, but that hasn’t stopped the IWF from delivering for the next generation of weightlifters. Today’s youth athletes are tomorrow’s world champions and Olympians, and the IWF has been working hard to ensure they will have the opportunity to serve as the foundation of a bright future for our sport.

“The pandemic has shown us the importance of embracing new technology to bring people together, and the IWF will continue to embrace these lessons in the future. There are clear benefits in terms of engagement and sustainability, and the IWF will also continue to encourage its Member Federations to provide opportunities to compete online.”

### **2020 OWF Cup – Online Tournament**

The Oceania Weightlifting Federation held an online real-time competition, the 2020 OWF Cup online tournament, between 5 and 6 December 2020. After the Eleiko Email Tournament and the Oceania League Tournament this was the third opportunity for lifters in the Oceania region to compete during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Altogether 44 lifters competed during the virtual event and there was complete gender equality, as there were 22 female and 22 male lifters.

Athletes could participate from their home gym or, where permitted, at their regular training venue or competition venue. The results of online competitions were not valid for OWF records. However, online competition results from this tournament were recognised in the OWF Rankings.

The best five athletes (male and female) based on the Sinclair formula also received prize money.



### **1st Online PanAm Cup LIVE by ZKC**

This event, held on 18-19 July, aimed to provide a safe competition opportunity for athletes training at home by prioritizing health and safety at the time of the pandemic.

Athletes had the choice to compete from their home (e.g., garage, terrace, garden, etc.) or, where they were allowed to do so, at their training facility (e.g., national training centre, local club or gym, etc.).

Around 70 Athletes from 15 countries took part in a competition that was broadcast live on the [IWF YouTube Channel](#).

Features of the online competition included:

- Athletes lifting at the same time but at different locations, with all attempts taken by rounds;
- Athletes lifting real weights in front of the camera, seeing each other's attempts via video conference;
- Athletes competing against each other – ensuring a real competition atmosphere,
- Trying out a new competition format,
- The event was supported by a commentator.

The event was assisted by the IWF Technology and Information System (TIS) and International Technical Officials (ITOs).

As this competition did not strictly adhere to the IWF TCRR, the IWF / PAWF did not officially recognize the results and new record(s). However, there was a virtual Medal Ceremony, with gold, silver and bronze medals awarded in each category, as usual: Snatch, Clean & Jerk and Total.

### **PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC GAMES**

In December, IWF received the disappointing news that weightlifting's quota for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games had been cut by the IOC in response to historical doping and governance issues.

Dr Irani responded with the following statement: "Clean weightlifters continue to pay a woefully heavy price for inadequate governance and for those — from a relatively limited number of countries — who tried to take shortcuts to success at London 2012 and Beijing 2008.

"Thanks to help from independent experts like our partners at the ITA, we have already reformed the IWF's anti-doping practices. And thanks to the help of independent experts, we are now reforming the IWF's governance.

"I believe we can meet the IOC's criteria for remaining on the Paris 2024 Olympic programme and even reach the point where we restore Olympic weightlifting opportunities for a new generation of clean weightlifters. We have already embarked on a journey towards radical governance reform. But we must be under no illusion about the scope and scale of change required."

## Governance

### DISCIPLINARY AND ETHICS COMMISSION

In November, the IWF announced the independent and highly-qualified members of its Disciplinary and Ethics Commission, marking the latest significant step in the federation's ongoing process of governance reform.

The Commission comprises five independent members, from five continents.

The Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary were selected by the Commission members themselves, who are also working on the final version of the terms of reference and working procedures.

Interim President Irani said: "The IWF Disciplinary and Ethics Commission has a critical role to play in ensuring that the IWF upholds the highest ethical standards and that any misconduct is thoroughly investigated.

"We are grateful to have such highly-qualified independent members sit on the Commission. Together they have decades' worth of experience that will be invaluable in guiding the IWF in the right direction. As we continue to accelerate the necessary governance reforms, the IWF family and our partners can have full confidence in the capability of this Commission to help safeguard weightlifting."

### REFORM AND GOVERNANCE COMMISSION

The first meeting of the IWF Reform and Governance Commission was held on 24 and 25 October, with Darren Charles Kane of Australia selected to start as Chair. The Commission was given responsibility for developing a new constitution and bylaws with a deadline of 22 January 2021. The new governing documents are to be circulated to IWF Member Federations two months prior to the IWF Electoral Reform Congress scheduled for 24 March 2021.

Alongside Kane, who also sits on the Legal Committee of FINA, is Damaris Itzel Young Aranda of Panama, a former international athlete who is also a sports law expert and member of the IOC Athletes' Entourage Commission. They are joined by Ximena Restrepo, an Olympic medallist for Colombia who in 2019 became the first ever female Vice President of World Athletics. The Commission will work based on the guidelines of ASOIF in regard to governance measurement and improvement. The independent experts will also be joined by IWF officials.

Interim President Irani said: "I am very grateful to the leading independent experts who have agreed to support the IWF with the huge undertaking ahead of us: revising our governance in just three months. The goal of complete reform for the IWF's governance is ambitious but also achievable. It is also overdue, notably in areas like athlete representation, term limits, accountability and transparency. Fortunately, we have reason to be optimistic. The successful reform of the IWF's anti-doping procedures, based on principles of independent expertise and wide-ranging consultation, points to what can be achieved, and how."

## **LEADERSHIP CHANGES**

In accordance with the IWF Constitution and By-laws, the IWF Executive Board at its meeting held on October 15, 2020 appointed Dr Michael Irani (GBR) as IWF Interim President.

Dr Irani was Chair of the IWF Medical Committee and a former Chair of the IWF Anti-Doping Commission. Dr Irani has extensive experience of the fight against doping and in safeguarding athlete welfare.

The appointment of an Interim President became necessary when the Executive Board decided to revoke the appointment of Ursula Papandrea as Acting Interim President, after the IOC President expressed strong concerns over progress in relation to governance and constitutional changes.

Dr Irani is the fourth president in six months, in a year of unprecedented turbulence for IWF.

In April, IWF's long-serving President Dr Tamas Ajan resigned. Dr Ajan had resigned his IOC honorary membership the previous month, following allegations he described as 'unfounded' in a documentary by ARD, the German broadcaster.

Attila Adamfi, the IWF Director General, also moved on from the Federation after 25 years of service. Subsequently, a new position of Chief Executive Officer was established and advertised.

## **ATHLETES' COMMISSION**

In September, the IWF announced the full composition of its interim Athletes' Commission, as the federation continues to take steps towards enhancing the inclusion of athletes in the sport's governance.

The Commission, chaired by Sarah Davies of Great Britain, comprises five male and five female athletes, with full voting rights. One man and one woman were selected from each Continent to ensure global representation.

## **McLAREN REPORT**

In June, Professor Richard McLaren published the results of his independent investigation into the IWF and weightlifting.

Professor McLaren was appointed in the wake of the documentary by ARD, the German broadcaster, which claimed that the leadership of the IWF, including former President Tamas Ajan, participated in and/or had knowledge of financial irregularities, corruption, doping control distribution, doping sample manipulation, doping payment irregularities, doping activities in specific nations and nepotism.

The IWF responded to the McLaren report by taking a number of key steps to lay the foundation for future progress.

As a first step, copies of the report and associated evidence were immediately shared with other organisations committed to ensuring that any past wrongdoing is uncovered and that the best possible governance practices are established at the IWF.





McLaren's report revealed a number of instances where the IWF's governance fell well short of that deserved by athletes, member federations, fans and everyone involved in the sport. In addition to being studied by the IWF's Oversight and Integrity Commission, the report was provided to the IOC, WADA, the ITA, ASOIF and GAISF. The ITA was empowered to investigate the potential for anti-doping rule violations that may have occurred. Work also began on governance reform at both constitutional and operational levels.

Independent expertise will be allied with athlete input in working to shape the future of the IWF and its relationship with the sport. A number of IWF member federations stressed the need for independence and transparency within this process and the OIC is committed to ensuring these principles are applied.



## Anti-Doping

### EXTENSION OF ITA PARTNERSHIP

In October, IWF confirmed an extension of its partnership with the International Testing Agency (ITA) until the end of 2024.

The agreement empowers the ITA to manage the entire anti-doping programme for international weightlifting, including the investigation and prosecution of all anti-doping rule violations (ADRVs). Since the first weightlifting agreement was signed with the ITA, it has collected more than 2,700 samples from weightlifters and investigated more than 110 ADRVs.

### WADA REPORT

Also in October, IWF provided an initial response to a report into weightlifting published by the Intelligence and Investigations (I&I) department of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), summarizing a number of lines of investigation spanning several years.

Interim President Irani said: “The provisional outcomes of WADA’s investigation into doping within weightlifting make for shocking reading. The IWF is firmly committed to empowering the ITA with the resources necessary for follow-up of any intelligence provided to it by WADA.

“The IWF is determined to ensure a level playing field for the clean weightlifters, coaches and officials acknowledged by WADA. We will continue to take the necessary steps to deliver this level playing field, relying on the independent advice of WADA, the ITA and the IWF’s newly-formed independent Anti-Doping Commission.”

### RUSSIAN ATHLETES

In October, six sanctions were imposed, while three more Anti-Doping Rule Violations were asserted against Russian athletes, as a result of historical data provided by a whistleblower to the WADA Intelligence and Investigations Department.

WADA I&I’s investigations were instrumental in building cases, which resulted in the athletes being charged with anti-doping rule violations.



## **Partnerships**

In October, the IWF and World Para Powerlifting signed a historic agreement called ‘Strengthening the World’, a Memorandum of Understanding strengthening the relationship between the two organisations in a variety of mutually-beneficial areas.

‘Strengthening the World’ has three key areas of collaboration: 1st Attempt – Raise the Bar (Competition), 2nd Attempt – Good Lift! (Education) and 3rd Attempt – I Lift & Press Clean (Anti-Doping strategy).

Through the agreement, IWF and World Para Powerlifting aim to transfer expertise and key learnings, explore synergies and cost efficiencies and collectively fight for strong and clean sport.

## **Member Federations**

In May, based on strong financial foundations, the IWF allocated \$500,000 in additional development funding for member federations in order to help them deal with extra burdens imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following consultation with the IOC, the IWF was able to assure members that no advance payment would be needed against revenue anticipated from Tokyo 2020.

Since letting member federations know of the opportunity to apply for additional resources, the IWF received more than 130 applications for additional development funding, demonstrating the extent to which extra help is needed and the extent to which it will be welcomed.

The IWF’s 2020 Development Programme had initially been established to fund seminars and equipment. Following the significant increase in funding made available, that scope was expanded to cover event support and expenses related to COVID-19. The revised scope included elements that will have a direct beneficial impact for athletes, including support for flights and accommodation in order to attend IWF-sanctioned competitions. In order to be eligible for development funding, IWF member federations had to complete a global survey and provide a budget together with audited financial statements.

During the pandemic, the IWF sent a strong message for athletes to stay at home and to find new ways to stay strong while avoiding public places. The Development and Education Commission alongside the Technical, Medical and Coaching and Research Committees worked to release useful content that kept weightlifters and fans engaged during this difficult period, including explanatory videos of the IWF Technical and Competition Rules & Regulations, home training tips, explanation about the importance of social distancing and positive messages of Member Federations and their lifters.



## **Anniversaries**

The IWF celebrated the 20th anniversary of the inclusion of women weightlifters at the Olympic Games.

The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games were held in the second half of September, where, in addition to the men's categories, women's categories were added to the weightlifting program. Previously female weightlifters could only compete at continental and world championships.

On the Olympic program weightlifters competed in eight male and seven female weight classes. Altogether 162 male athletes from 63 countries and 85 female athletes from 47 countries participated in the weightlifting competitions.

Female weightlifters broke 17 senior world record, while male weightlifters broke nine senior world records during the Sydney Olympic Games.