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WHY NEW FORMATS CAN GIVE OUR SPORTS – AND ALL OF US – A LIFT: UIPM SECRETARY GENERAL'S MESSAGE

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In times of darkness we look for light. In the context of UIPM Sports, we don't have to look far into the future to be reminded about the exciting times ahead.

True, our whole global community has been starved of opportunities to compete – and, in many cases, to train – in the stadiums and parks, the pools and pistes and the roads and beaches where our events normally take place.

When we finally do emerge from the shutdown created by this pandemic, various plans put on the table in recent times will be closer to fruition. In fact, we are only a week away from the first UIPM-sanctioned event since UIPM 2020 Pentathlon World Cup Cairo back in February.

From September 11-13 in Budapest (HUN), the New Tetrathlon format designed for the Youth

Olympic Summer Games Dakar 2026 will be tested for the fifth and final time.

And the very next day (September 14-16), the New Pentathlon format designed for the Olympic Summer Games Paris 2024 will be tested for the first time.

Not long after that (September 25-26), the second test of the Paris 2024 format will take place in Cairo (EGY).

So why are we proposing these formats for future Olympic Games?

In the case of New Tetrathlon, you will see an elimination format that is more dynamic and exciting than its predecessor.

Each heat will last about 50 minutes and the action will take place in a more compact venue that will make it easier for audiences at the venue and watching on TV and digital platforms to follow the sport.

It's a big setback that Dakar 2022 – Africa's first Olympic Games – has been put back by four years, but not only does this give us more time to get the format exactly right before we showcase it on that stage, it actually means we can embed New Tetrathlon by using the new format for many youth competitions in the years to come.

I'm convinced it will help young athletes to fall in love with our sport even more deeply.

As for New Pentathlon, a smaller and more compact venue will make our Olympic competition more intimate and more sustainable. A continuous and better-connected sport with shorter breaks – following advice from the Olympic Broadcasting Service and Paris 2024 – will improve the spectacle, as will the elimination format.

You will also see a reduced venue infrastructure, less equipment and facilities and human resources, and a more logical sequence in the competition that will make it easier for audiences to understand.

The reduced costs compared with Tokyo 2020 will improve the sustainability of our flagship competition product, without removing its essence, and make it more compatible with the IOC's New Norm and Agenda 2020 programmes.

I think Baron Pierre de Coubertin would approve, don't you?

So what has been done so far?

- The UIPM Athletes, Coaches and Technical Committee met jointly and came up with recommendations in January 2019.
- A preliminary working group conducted four NT / YOG format tests in 2019 and official working groups were established for both formats in September 2019.
- The YOG format concept was approved by the UIPM Executive Board and submitted to IOC in October 2019.
- Working groups meetings took place between October and January and the NP / OG format concept was approved by the UIPM EB in its meeting at IOC Headquarters at the end of January 2020. Of course, after that all testing was postponed until September 2020 due to the pandemic.

There is one other aspect of future Olympic Games which I hope will generate hopeful thoughts about the future, even though we are still in a difficult position today.

We are going to push hard for the Pentathlon Mixed Relay to be included in the Olympic sporting programme for Paris 2024.

And why do we think our application will be hard to resist?

- The Mixed Relay will run on the same format as the individual competition, which means the same number of athletes involved in the Olympic Games.
- It will be more attractive to spectators and broadcasting.
- More nations will have a chance of being on the podium.
- The Mixed Relay already has 10 years' history in UIPM and various multi-sport Games.
- It can attract a more diverse TV audience demographic.
- The Mixed Relay is one of the highest traffic generators for our digital media.
- One additional day of competition removes the need for any additional venue requirements.

For everyone involved in the upcoming tests in Hungary and Egypt, I thank you for contributing to the realisation of our dreams.

I wish we could all be there with you to see the formats taking shape, but I believe we will all be back together and sharing the joy of sport before very long.