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Team PNG still focused despite postponement of Olympic Games

The Olympic Games for this year have been postponed but Team PNG athletes are encouraged to maintain their focus and continue their preparations for the new date.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) President, Thomas Bach and Prime Minister of Japan, Abe Shinzo announced the postponement of this year's Games to be "rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than (northern hemisphere) summer 2021."

The decision was made in the best interest of the athletes and the public in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

President of the PNG Olympic Committee, Sir John Dawanincura, welcomed the advise from the IOC and the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee saying PNG remains firm on its efforts to ensure that its athletes will be ready for the new date of the Games.

"It is unfortunate that we cannot have the Olympic Games this year but this decision is the right thing to do to ensure that this global pandemic does not cause unnecessary pain or take any more lives in the world. We thank the IOC and the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee for their vision and concern for the wellbeing and health of the athletes, all involved in the Games and the public," said Sir John.

Chef de Mission for Team PNG to Tokyo 2020, Tamzin Wardley in her message to PNG's targeted Olympic sports, stressed that the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games are NOT cancelled but have been rescheduled.

"This means we all need to continue our preparations for the Games. PNGOC is continuing with our preparations for the Tokyo 2020 Games. This also includes our athletes continuing their training the best they can while accommodating for the current environment and restrictions being faced," she said.

The postponement of the 2020 Olympics means that the qualification process will be affected in some way and the IOC said it will be working with the International Federations of respective sports on a way forward.

Team PNG has already qualified two spots for the Tokyo 2020 Games, both from the sport of Sailing, while other sports were in their respective qualification processes.

Wardley further commented, "Obviously this is the right decision for both athletes and the organisers and we understand the scale of the decision and the impact on the host country. It has been exceedingly difficult for athletes to continue the qualification process and this decision will be very hard for those athletes who have been maintaining their peak condition throughout this process.

"We still have a number of our top athletes in overseas countries, away from their families, in these terrible times. The PNGOC will continue to work to ensure their wellbeing and to keep them informed once further information is available to us from the IOC.

"These are unique times but as the IOC President has said, the Olympic Games provide light at the end of this dark tunnel.

"Let's work together in true Olympic spirit," said Wardley.

Every year the PNG Olympic Committee works hard to raise funds for Team PNG to attend international Games such as the Olympics however, most of their activities for 2020 have also been postponed due to COVID-19.

Secretary General of the PNG Olympic Committee, Auvita Rapilla said that the support of their sponsors, partners and member National Federations is very important to them and the PNG Olympic Committee are planning to stage their events at a later time when things return to normal.

The PNG Olympic Committee encourages all their members and stakeholders to stay informed about the COVID-19 situation by visiting websites of the PNG Olympic Committee, the World Health Organization and the International Olympic Committee.

She encouraged everyone to observe the precautionary measures put in place to keep themselves and their families safe from potential infection by the deadly virus.

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