

## Participation of Russian and Ukrainian athletes in the World Championships

KIF has been exploring the possibility of participating Russian athletes in the 6th World Kudo Championships and the 3rd World Kudo Junior Championships scheduled for May this year.

At the beginning of the new year, I asked the KIF board members, the members of the Kudo European Committee, and the board members of the Kudo All Japan Federation, which is the organizer of the world championships, about the participation of athletes and referees from Russia. It was an informal inquiry under the following comments. As for Ukraine, we have been coordinating by inviting them at the expense of KIF.

Unfortunately, we are facing the issue of sports and politics here since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But is it okay to close the door to the World Championships just because they are a Russian citizen? "Is it okay for a country's problems to affect our friends who have been seriously engaged in Kudo?" "Can Kudo become someone who pursues the ideal of sports?"

However, the reality is that many lives from both countries have been lost on the battlefield, and I believe that unconditionally accepting the participation of Russian athletes would be unreasonable in many ways.

After that, at the end of February, we held board meetings of KIF and the Kudo All Japan Federation to formally listen to their opinions. As I reported earlier, the Board of Directors voted with an overwhelming majority to approve the proposal from KIF.

Corona disaster has finally shown signs of convergence, but unfortunately the conflict in Ukraine has continued, and many precious lives have been lost.

Russia has been sanctioned mainly in western countries, and in the sports world international competitions have continued to eliminate the participation of Russia and Belarus players.

However, in the Olympic Charter, it is claimed as follows.

- The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.
- Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement shall apply political neutrality. They have the rights and obligations of autonomy.
- The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

One of Japan's leading cultures is the tea ceremony. The tea ceremony is a culture that samurai loved. Like KUDO and JUDO, the word "道" is used. The typical tea room is a narrow space of four and a half tatamis (about 3m square), and the host behaves tea to guests. The tea room is a sacred place, and one of the important spirits in the tea ceremony

is that everyone is equal. In the tea room, there is no discrimination due to status, occupation, race, nationality, etc. In KUDO, where Japan is the birthplace, I hope that if you go up on the mat, you will respect a player who loves KUDO. The word "空" of KUDO has the meaning of accepting everything without being particular. It is a World Championships held at difficult times, and I hope that this KUDO's philosophy will be recognized again.

Both KUDO Ukraine and KUDO Russia are friends who have developed KUDO with Japan. KIF is making efforts to make adjustment in the hope that athletes from both countries will be able to participate in this World Championships. If the participation is realized, we ask for everyone's consideration so that they can concentrate on the place where they compete Kudo.

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