

Lausanne, Switzerland

2 January 2025

Dear Mr. Kohler,

Please find the answers to your questions below.

We respectfully ask that the SRF adhere to the facts surrounding these matters in order to provide a more accurate portrayal of the situation in your coverage, and discount speculation and complaints by people who have deliberately chosen not to involve themselves in WDSF's Breaking project.

**Q: There is wide criticism regarding lacking transparency of the WDSFs' leadership from different parties that are or were involved with the WDSF in general and/or its endeavor to bring Breaking to the Paris Olympics. How do you comment on this?**

**A:** By replying that it's not accurate criticism at all. We have 100 National Member Bodies (NMBs) and are otherwise affiliated with numerous other sport organizations, none of which are making such complaints. Athletes and would-be athletes (including you) can join these bodies if they want. It's their choice. There is a minority of Breakers (or people who say that they align themselves with Breakers), who deliberately and loudly chose to stand outside the process of bringing Breaking into the Olympics, complaining that they had no input and could not unilaterally assume control of the process, while at the same time carefully refusing to involve themselves in the democratic structures that had been set up by us and approved by the IOC – and were open to them. Nobody kept them out. The people who are doing the complaining about the system were invited to join it numerous times.

Our role as an International Federation was to provide a fair and successful Breaking event at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 within the Olympic system, not outside of it, by making available to everyone in every country an open, democratic, equitable selection system on all five continents, which we did to the full satisfaction of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). We did so by offering and encouraging enquirers to get involved. But some people thought they could circumvent the democratic process by demanding control without conforming to the IOC system. This we could not allow, because involvement in the Olympic Games was not a commodity that we could unilaterally hand to people. They had to come to our NMBs, get involved, and submit to the democratic will of all the Breakers, not just self-appointed leaders.

Under the current WDSF leadership, our Federation has taken substantial steps to improve in the areas of transparency and good governance throughout the organisation.

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Among numerous recent initiatives, we have increased transparency with regard to our annual reports, financial accounts, annual general meeting materials, Presidium (board) minutes, and event bidding documents, to name just a few.

While we are under no statutory or legal obligation to livestream our Annual General Meeting, we do so proactively on our YouTube channel for anyone wishing to access such information, further underscoring our commitment to transparency and good governance.

We are aware that you apparently accepted the allegations of non-transparency when you requested copies of our annual audited financial statements from the Canton de Vaud, where the WDSF is domiciled. As you eventually worked out, all our annual audited financial statements are published for all to see on our website.

In addition, we open the floor at every Annual General Meeting (AGM) to any of our WDSF delegates, as long as they file a motion within the specified timeframe. We have enjoyed many open and productive discussions on a range of topics pertinent to the good of DanceSport over the years as a result of this democratic and transparent process.

But first you have to join the Olympic system by joining your WDSF member body. And you have to get elected to managerial positions and have representative status in Commissions and Meetings. That's open to all. People who refuse this opportunity can't complain that they have been denied transparency or involvement.

Our efforts to enhance good governance and transparency at the WDSF have even been recognised by the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF), whose Governance Taskforce gave us a score of 163 in its 2023-2024 assessment, up from a score of 104 we received in our first assessment in 2021-2022. They have told us that this represents the highest improvement in governance scores among all International Federations globally.

We remain fully committed to the continuous improvement of transparency within the WDSF as well as at all our National Member Bodies.

As a final general observation, we note that we owe transparency to our members and not to disgruntled critics among them or third parties lacking any legitimacy. Our members can always openly raise questions and request explanations, notably in the General Assembly. In an association, legitimate "critics" thus have a means of expressing their opposing opinions through their interventions and ultimately through their votes. As the results of the votes tend to demonstrate, any legitimate criticism that may exist towards the WDSF management is certainly not as "wide" as your question seems to assume (on which objective basis?).

**Q: Minutes of managing committee meetings have not been posted for over three years. Why?**

A: While we are under no statutory or legal obligation to publish Managing Committee minutes, we ensure that critical governance transparency is maintained through the publication of all WDSF Presidium Meeting and AGM minutes. These bodies are our

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legislatures, and they are the ones that make the big decisions. The number of WDSF Presidium Meetings has increased significantly since pre-COVID times – double or triple the number held by previous administrations – with the corresponding minutes of each meeting published openly and transparently on the WDSF website.

Our administration has been intensely focused on two major tasks: ensuring the successful Olympic debut of Breaking at Paris 2024 and revitalizing our DanceSport competitions post-pandemic amid geopolitical and economic challenges. This increased operational demand has necessitated prioritizing our resources towards maintaining the quality and integrity of our events and administrative functions.

As mentioned, we have significantly increased the number of our meetings to respond effectively to the demands of our sport and operational requirements. However, the intensive nature of preparing for and documenting these meetings places considerable demands on our staff. To manage this effectively, we have placed a focus on capturing the key decisions and outcomes in our Presidium Meeting minutes and AGM minutes, which are detailed and made publicly available on our website. This ensures that while we streamline our internal processes to maintain efficiency, we continue to uphold our commitment to transparency and provide stakeholders with comprehensive insights into our governance and decision-making processes.

**Q: According to your audited financial reports and your most recent budget estimate, the IOC has provided the WDSF with approximately 3.9 million CHF of funding between 2021 and 2024 (cash donations, grants, sponsorship payments, marketing payments, IOC Development payments, IOC cash reimbursements). The primary goal of this funding is the development of Breaking as a discipline. Looking at the balance just before Paris, you have increased your cash balance by approximately 2 million CHF over the period of the above-mentioned IOC contributions. Also, different sources tell us that the development of Breaking was subject to strict spending controls. How do you comment on the increase in the cash balance, in parallel with increasing IOC contributions, while apparently saving on Breaking?**

A: You certainly got this wrong. Please do not cherry-pick a few facts without doing the work required to understand the whole of our finances and our decisions. You're taking a few things out of context and distorting facts. Our operations are much more complicated and wide-ranging than your question implies.

As the IOC-recognised International Sports Federation for all DanceSport disciplines, the WDSF is fully committed to the development of all DanceSport disciplines, including Breaking. Our financial strategy, carefully aligned with IOC guidelines, is designed for long-term sustainability and growth of these sports. Specifically, the funding we received from the IOC has been diligently allocated not only for immediate projects but also for ongoing and future initiatives that extend well beyond Paris 2024.

The WDSF's "Vision 2012", "2020 Vision", and the "World DanceSport Games" held in Kaoshiung, Chinese Taipei in 2013 continued the process of incorporating the development and growth of more DanceSport disciplines, providing opportunities for all DanceSport disciplines to potentially be included in multi-sports events.

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The WDSF started funding Breaking seriously from the end of the 2015 financial year. On 1 January 2016, the WDSF's capital stood at CHF 2,804,159. From that time, the WDSF and our members used significant capital to support the IOC and our vision for the eventual hugely successful inclusion of Breaking at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires.

Therefore, to solely isolate the financial figures from 2021-2024 years is a massive distortion that ignores journalistic ethics and professional reporting standards with regard to your documentary.

You are well aware that our agreements with the IOC are "subject to confidentiality" between the WDSF and the IOC. However, you are correct that we do provide financial and written reports to the IOC with regard to any and all spending related to the Road to Paris 2024 and related projects. We do this as requested and required by the IOC.

By 31 December 2019, the WDSF's capital had been reduced to CHF 969,342 predominantly as a result of our Federation's investment in Breaking. That is, Breaking was partially responsible for the increased costs of staffing, contractors, and various overheads as presented in our annual audited financial statements, and partially responsible for the big drop in our capital.

In addition, due to the shutdown of competitions and subsequent financial fallout as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, over a two-year period from March 2020 the WDSF had to cut some CHF 2,000,000 from our budgets, while still supporting the development and growth of the Federation, Breaking and all DanceSport disciplines worldwide.

Logically, what you are seeing given the increase in capital from 2021 to 2024 is essentially part of the COVID-19 recovery period, and the result of a "timing" difference in terms of money being spent on Breaking from 2016 to 2024, to when it was recouped. The suggestion of underspending on Breaking is not only unfounded but completely overlooks the substantial ongoing investments we make in Breaking and in all DanceSport disciplines.

The WDSF has never withheld spending on Breaking activities. We continue to spend what is required and what our budget allows to support Breaking.

**Q: During the same period the WDSF has granted its general secretary an impressive salary raises. How do you comment on this fact?**

A: First off, the salary of our General Secretary is not public information. However, we can inform you that his salary sits reasonably within the lower range when compared to those of executives at other International Federations.

The General Secretary's present salary also takes into account his relocation to Switzerland. Mr. Nifontov's commitment to the WDSF and DanceSport was clearly demonstrated when he and his family changed countries (from Spain) so that he could best perform his duties as General Secretary in a much more expensive country.

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As a Swiss national, you certainly do not need to be informed of the impact of the costs of living in this country, which understandably would justify a material adjustment of an existing remuneration. In any event, the decision regarding his salary reflects the satisfaction of the WDSF with the quality of his work.

Mr. Nifontov has worked extremely hard since he became WDSF General Secretary in 2021. Since then, he has performed duties above and beyond the scope of his mandate that were particularly critical during the challenging recovery period post-pandemic and the period leading to the Olympic Games. His enormous contributions are clear facts that the entire WDSF Presidium has acknowledged, and for which he is fully deserving of his salary increase.

**Q: You have not secured sponsorships in connection with Breaking after the failed Red Bull deal, despite indicating to your members that cancelling the deal will bring the opportunity for new partnerships. According to several sources, these lacking funds have endangered the professionalism and integrity of the entire qualifying process and the development of Breaking as a discipline within the WDSF. How do you comment on this?**

A: The “Red Bull deal” was a possible cooperation but not a sponsorship deal, so it didn’t “fail”. It never came about. It was ultimately not aligned with the best interests of our athletes, DanceSport or the independence and autonomy of our International Federation. For instance, Red Bull operates on its own series of competitions, league of sponsored athletes, and judging methods. As an Olympic Sports federation with the goal of entering Breaking in the Olympic Games, the WDSF has necessarily chosen to prioritize collaborating directly with the IOC to preserve our governance standards, maintain our integrity, and ensure that our practices align with the very clear, established Olympic values and standards.

We were delighted to work with the ultimate sporting partner with zero conflicts – the IOC – rather than a commercial organisation that wanted undue influence and control over Breaking’s Olympic journey and provided no support to the Olympic Games (and on the contrary, was a direct competitor of one of the top Olympic sponsors). We firmly believe that this was a sound choice in the interest of sport even if it meant declining a short-term financial benefit. The usual criticism against sports organisations is that they sell their souls – and sell out their athletes – for money. This is precisely what we did not do.

Regarding the concerns about the professionalism and integrity of the qualifying process for Breaking, these claims are unfounded. The success of Breaking within the Olympic framework—evidenced by the calibre of top B-Boys and B-Girls participating, the representation of all continents by athletes as required by the IOC, the qualifications of athletes, officials and the Breaking Management Team involved, the judging system approved by the IOC, and the fully sold-out events at the Games—underscores the robustness and fairness of our processes.

**Q: Several parties that are or were involved with the WDSF accuse its leadership of not adhering to good governance principles. This includes, among others, silencing**

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**critical voices, not adhering to statutes, not responding timely to complaints or inquiries, and changing statutes to the leadership's benefit. How do you comment on this?**

A: In a word, those accusations are nonsense. In particular, how did we “silence” anyone? Apparently, they’re talking to you! But it is impossible to answer blanket, undefined criticisms from anonymous critics that you have not disclosed to us, and we refer you to our answer to your first question as a point of reference. As mentioned, there are well-documented processes within the WDSF and among our stakeholders to express specific criticisms and to raise issues. No one has been prevented from using them. You can see this for yourself by viewing the most legitimate forum in our organisation, the General Assembly, which are all live streamed on YouTube.

**Q: The WDSF has frequently changed and updated its Breaking Rules and Regulations Manual (BRRM) as the qualifying process for Paris was already on its way. The changes seem to have been made dynamically, often without adequate information of National Member Bodies or athletes. Additionally, WDSF seems to have violated its own statutes in the pre-selection process by not adding up points and ranks according to statutes. How do you comment on these irregularities in the qualifying process?**

A: This was the first time that Breaking was included in the Olympic Games and the WDSF strived to make it be the best version possible for all athletes and National Member Bodies. Therefore, the Breaking Rules and Regulations Manual (BRRM) needs to be a live, organic document that can be improved on, especially when given critical and constructive feedback from the Breaking community.

This approach was essential, considering there were no precedents to guide us. It is crucial to understand that the dynamic adjustments to the BRRM were necessary to adapt to the unique challenges posed by incorporating a new sport into the Olympics and precisely made in direct response to real-time developments and feedback from Breaking athletes and officials. These changes were made with the utmost consideration for fairness, competitiveness, and in close consultation with the Breaking community involved.

Specifically, regarding two changes to the BRRM:

In early 2023, we amended the BRRM wording to make the meaning of the Pre-Selection tool calculations clearer; there were no major changes to the rules.

Another amendment was made at the end of December 2023 ahead of the first Olympic Qualifier Series in Shanghai. Based on input from the Breaking community, we added a clause that removed the highest score and lowest score from the nine judges during Pre-Selection to make the scoring fairer and more objective.

The accusation that the WDSF violated its own statutes in the pre-selection process is completely incorrect. We complied with them. Furthermore, the WDSF conducted technical meetings for all team leaders before each Olympic qualifying event to ensure that any amendments were effectively communicated. Updated versions of the BRRM are always publicly available on the WDSF website for all to refer to.

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The WDSF is committed to continuously refining our processes and engaging transparently with all stakeholders to ensure that Breaking's presence in the Olympics honours the artistic sport's values and meets the highest standards of competitive integrity.

**Q: Isabelle Tay, the daughter of the president Shawn Tay was appointed to the role of Safeguarding officer. There seems to be no protocol of the procedure of how she was appointed, and you have not advertised the position to a broader circle, even though it is one of the few paid positions. Various people connected to the WDSF label this as nepotism. How do you comment on this?**

A: All hiring decisions at the WDSF are made based on merit, qualifications, and the alignment of candidates with our core values. Isabelle Tay had an ideal profile to be a candidate for the job and was proposed not by President Tay, who recused himself from the hiring process and waived any voting rights, but by members of the WDSF Presidium who were looking for a qualified candidate who could perform the role to a high level at very short notice. The entire process of her engagement was managed by the WDSF Vice-President for Legal Affairs with the Presidium, without any interference from the WDSF President, and to which the IOC was informed before the decision of her engagement was made. Importantly, Isabelle has an exceptional scholastic background in relevant fields (Ph.D. in Developmental and Psychological Sciences from Stanford University, USA, 2023; Master of Arts in Psychology from Stanford University, USA, 2022; Bachelor of Arts in Psychology [Summa cum laude] from New York University, USA, 2017) as well as firsthand experience as a former professional athlete and coach. Isabelle became an IOC-certified Safeguarding Officer in Sport in 2023 and has maintained a strong working relationship with the IOC Safeguarding Unit.

**Q: The WDSF is criticized for not sufficiently including the Breaking community and for appropriating Breaking in the way it proceeded to bring it to the Paris Olympics. How do you comment on this?**

A: The WDSF's involvement with the Breaking community has been substantial and collaborative, aimed at integrating Breaking as a recognized sport while respecting its cultural roots. We have worked closely with many leaders from the Breaking community to preserve the authenticity of Breaking while also meeting the requirements of an Olympic sport.

The WDSF Breaking management team includes key figures representing different countries, such as *B-Boy Bojin (Chinese Taipei)*, *B-Boy MG (Slovakia)*, *B-Boy Max (Portugal)*, *B-Boy Katsu (Japan)*, *B-Boy Skim (South Korea)*, *B-Boy Kid Glyde (Puerto Rico)*, *B-Boy Aslan (Russia)*, and *B-Boy Sweet Lu (USA)*. Each of these leaders contributes through specific roles and have been highly constructive and aligned in mindset to present Breaking in the most authentic and optimal way at the Games.

Of course, there are many other capable and influential leaders from the Breaking community who, while not directly involved at the WDSF governance level, have contributed through their respective National Member Bodies. Those who fundamentally oppose the idea of a structured system and those who feel that they are somehow entitled, without any democratic process, may find themselves less involved.

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The success of the WDSF's collaboration with the Breaking community is evidenced by the sheer turnout of top Breakers at the Olympic Games, the Olympic Qualifier Series and qualifying events. This demonstrates that many Breakers are open to adapting traditional norms of Breaking for a global audience, such as modifying certain gestures to ensure appropriateness for all age groups.

The WDSF successfully delivered the Breaking competition at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, as well as the runup 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, thanks to our close cooperation with the Breaking community. This success – as evidenced by our events being completely sold out – reflects the extensive involvement of officials and top B-Girls and B-Boys from around the world.

Together with Olympic Solidarity and the Breaking community, the WDSF ran numerous educational seminars around the world with teachings led by Breaking experts. These seminars provided athletes and their teams with invaluable advice from leading experts, crucial for their preparation on the road to the Olympic Games.

Furthermore, the WDSF constantly encourages its National Member Bodies to engage with their local Breaking communities at the national level. The WDSF has successfully mediated in various countries to establish feasible connections and understanding between institutions and B-Boys and B-Girls, resulting in direct benefits for hundreds of Breakers, such as national scholarships and paid travel expenses.

Collaborating with members of the Breaking community, from 2021 to 2024, the WDSF organized 68 Breaking competitions—34 for B-Boys and 34 for B-Girls—across all continents, as well as 19 educational congresses for officials in the same period, with latest initiative specifically designed for female judges to promote gender equality among officials. The participation of numerous athletes and officials underscores the deep engagement of the Breaking community in these events, contributing to the global growth of Breaking as a sport.

The WDSF worked collaboratively with an exceptional team of Breakers to bring Breaking to the Olympic Games Paris 2024. We will continue to work with most of these Breaking specialists now and into the future, including at multiple WDSF Breaking World and/or Continental Championships being conducted worldwide on an annual basis, the World Games in 2025, the Youth Olympic Games Dakar 2026, and the Continental and regional Games, to mention just a few.

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