



Dear friends and partners,

With the Rio 2016 Opening Ceremony now less than six months away, media headlines are regularly being dominated by coverage of the Games preparations and qualifications. Thanks to your assistance and work much of this coverage is focused on the real stars of the show - your athletes and your sports.

We also realise that beyond the sport and the operational preparations, issues that affect the whole population in Brazil and our region are also regularly linked to the Olympic and Paralympic Games - the recent coverage around the Zika virus is an example.

We felt that it was important for us to provide an update to all of you on this situation following the IOC and IPC's notes last month in order to give you accurate and comprehensive information to share with your federations and athletes.

The Zika virus is a global issue and the World Health Organisation (WHO) is leading the international response as the relevant authority with the expertise in this field. Rio 2016 is working closely with the IOC, IPC and its local stakeholders to ensure that we are being kept informed of the latest advice from WHO and that preventive actions are being taken around the Olympic and Paralympic venues.

We decided to hold the communication of this update until the WHO Director General Margaret Chan met with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff in Brasilia on 23 February. Dr Chan gave the following comments regarding the Zika virus in Brazil: "I want to reassure you that the government is working very closely with the international Olympic/Paralympic movement, with the local organizing committee, supported by the WHO, to make sure we have a very good work plan to target the mosquito, and to make sure that people who will come here either as visitors or athletes will get the maximum protection they need."

It is important to highlight that the WHO does not recommend any change to travel plans for Brazil. While awareness for the issue and taking of precautions are essential, we are continuing to go about our daily lives normally here in Rio and the programme of test events is continuing successfully. Additionally, last month saw over two million visitors take to the streets of Rio to celebrate the annual Carnival alongside the millions of Cariocas. The event was a great success.

Doctor João Grangeiro, the Rio 2016 Medical Director, continues to recommend that visitors to Rio follow the advice of the WHO, particularly if they are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant. WHO's latest advice can be found on their website [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).

The Zika virus issue is one that the whole population is working together against and the Brazilian government has put in place a major programme to tackle the mosquito that carries the Zika virus - this is currently seen as the best way of combatting the spread of the virus. The government, led by President Dilma Rousseff, is deploying more than 220,000 personnel to help educate the population and assist them in cleaning areas of stagnant water, where the mosquito lays its eggs.

On the Rio 2016 side, we also have a comprehensive plan in place to make sure that all the Olympic and Paralympic venues are regularly inspected for puddles of stagnant water and where this is found that steps are taken to clear the water immediately. The health and safety of our guests - Athletes, Tourists, Volunteers and Officials - is our first priority.

Furthermore, in all test events, our Rio 2016 medical teams will be on site to provide teams with updates, more detailed information and mosquito bite avoidance measures including repellent.

While everybody is working very hard to tackle this issue over the next six months, it should be taken into consideration that the Games will be held in the Brazilian winter, when the cooler and dryer conditions lead to a reduction in the presence of mosquitos. It is also worth noting that according to the United States CDC (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention) 80% of people who contract the Zika virus present no symptoms at all.

We will continue to work with the IOC, IPC and the relevant Brazilian authorities to monitor the issue closely and will keep you informed of any major developments on this topic.

We remain strongly confident that Rio will organize excellent Games with memorable celebrations and we look forward to welcoming you all here this August and September, or before for test events and pre-Games preparations.

We remain at your disposal if you have any further questions about Rio 2016, the first Olympic and Paralympic Games in South America.