



**INTERNATIONAL
NETBALL
FEDERATION**

Press Release

06th July, 2017

President Molly Rhone addresses INF Congress in Gaborone, Botswana

The Honourable Molly Rhone OJ, CD, President of the International Netball Federation, this morning delivered the following address to Congress Members:

“On behalf of the Board of the International Netball Federation, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our valued Members who are joining us at Congress, and particularly to those who are attending for the first time.

I’d like to take this opportunity to introduce our Board to you: Sue Taylor, Vice President; Ann Tod, Finance Director; Octavia Gibson, our Independent Director;

Patricia Butcher, Director for Americas; Tebogo Lebotse, Director for Africa; Tina Browne, Director for Oceania; and our two Directors, Janet Wrighton for Europe, and Gaby Hochbaum, for Asia, who unfortunately cannot be here due to personal reasons.

Netball continues to grow and develop at an extraordinary pace, and much has happened since our last Congress held in Sydney in 2015, not least our spectacular and highly successful first ever Netball World Cup. I will review some of the key happenings now.

Last year, I announced the launch of Netball 2020, our four-year plan, and the template for the way we drive our sport forward to the next decade. As netball’s world governing body, the INF is in the fortunate position of being able to build on success. We are a thriving and expanding sport, well-governed and respected, with the courage to develop and grow. Our success and our reputation are based on a shared vision, and in Netball 2020 we identified three key themes to underpin our strategy: Governing with Integrity; Thrilling World Class Events; and Empowering through Netball.

Our plan has been very well received, and we have had excellent endorsements for Netball 2020 from many of our key stakeholders, including the IOC, who commented, and I quote: “With ‘Netball

2020', the INF is using the power of sport on and off the field of play to make a difference and to build towards realising the vision of inspiring a young generation through the Olympic values that all of us hold so dear."

Although netball is not yet an Olympic sport, it is an IOC recognised sport, and the INF works closely with the IOC to ensure best practice and promote netball and women's sport. I am particularly pleased that there is a growing awareness of the importance of women's sport, and debate around the role of women in sport. This is an area I fiercely believe needs to change and gender equality constantly addressed to give more women leaders opportunities to contribute and shape sport at the highest level.

I am delighted, therefore, to report that I have recently been appointed to the IOC Sport and Active Society Commission, which will strengthen our vital relationship with the IOC even further.

In April last year, I was proud to accept the International World Games Association Athlete of the Year Award on behalf of Malawian netballer Mwai Kumwenda. The presentation took place at the IWGA's Annual General Meeting, held at SportAccord in Lausanne, Switzerland, and I received the award from IWGA President, José Perurena. Mwai was one of 18 international nominations for the prestigious award from a cross-section of sports, and was crowned the clear winner in an online poll. Mwai is a great example of the opportunities netball can give, and a powerful role model for girls in the developing world. Her high-profile award was a big boost for this very successful and talented African netballer, for her country Malawi, and for our sport, a real illustration of how netball can empower.

INF's engagement in Africa has continued at every level, with the Official Draw for the Netball World Youth Cup 2017 taking place here in Gaborone last October, following the Qualifiers in our five regions. NWYC 2017 is the first international sporting event that Botswana has hosted, and is hugely significant for the country. It is also the INF's first world event to be held in Africa, and our first ever Netball World Youth Cup – building on the World Youth Netball Championships and raising our elite youth game to new levels.

During my visit here in October, I met with sponsors, partners, the Local Organising Committee and government ministers, all working hard to ensure that NWYC 2017 will be a resounding success. This tournament will leave Botswana the legacy of an upskilled local workforce, with the confidence and experience to take on more world class events in the future, something for the country to be immensely proud and excited about.

Another vital legacy of NWYC2017 is our determination to put measures in place that reflect netball's commitment to making sport a safe place. That place is one where there is respect, integrity, and care taken for the welfare and well-being of all involved. As a Federation, we are fortunate to have partners who share our vision and values. We are very grateful to the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sport, and the Botswana Netball Association, for partnering together to provide a Welfare and Safeguarding Officer to protect the welfare of athletes, coaches, volunteers, and everyone involved in NWYC 2017. This post will be a feature of all INF events in the future.

A further enduring legacy to netball is the introduction of a Code of Conduct for volunteers, designed to ensure that volunteers involved in NWYC2017, and future events, conduct themselves in a manner that protects the reputation, well-being and integrity of the Organising committee as well as the well-being of the coaches, officials, administrators, volunteers and players.

Another international event showcasing our young netballers was the World University Netball Championship, which took place in July last year, in Miami, Florida. The competition was won by South Africa, in a tough, thrilling and very close final against Jamaica. The INF continues to strengthen its ties with FISU, the university sports federation. This was an ideal opportunity to promote netball in the Americas, a region where we are keen to see our sport grow and develop further.

We were also delighted to announce the next hosts of the Netball World Youth Cup 2021 as Fiji. We had two very strong contenders for this event in Samoa and Fiji, but Fiji's bid won through and we look forward to working with them to build on the success of our new flagship youth event.

Our young athletes are our future, our most precious resource, and the INF continues to be regarded as a leader in safeguarding in sport. Last year we were proud and delighted to be nominated for a Beyond Sport Award in recognition of our work in keeping children safe.

We have earned a reputation for good governance, clean sport and strong safeguarding, and we are working to further develop our relationships with governing bodies across sport, including the World Anti-Doping Association, the Commonwealth Games Federation, ARISF - the Association of Recognised International Sports Federations – of which I am a Board Member – and the International Olympic Committee.

I am pleased to inform Congress that I have been elected as a Member of FIFA's Governance Committee, a role I look forward to undertaking for the next four years. In addition, our CEO, Clare Briegal, has been appointed to the British Rowing Governance Working Group. It is important that we are working at the highest level with other organisations, to share knowledge and best practice and be seen as leaders in good governance.

I cannot underestimate our commitment to governing with integrity and as a Board we have made significant steps in ensuring that we are progressive in this area and listen to our Members' needs.

Since our last Congress, we have reviewed our Board's competencies to ensure we have a Board with an excellent and diverse skill set, agile and best-placed to respond to our Members' requirements and the challenges and opportunities that running a successful sport bring.

We have set up a Governance working group to strongly underpin this area and we continue to introduce new policies and amend existing ones as a direct result of listening to our Members, such as the Draw policy which will be presented to you later in Congress.

The INF is working hard for you, and for netball, and we encourage you to work with us and make the most of the opportunities to grow and enhance your Association.

During the tournament, we will be running a series of workshops and I strongly urge you all to look at what is available and what you can learn from and adapt in your Association. We have several topics on offer including governance, sponsorship and safe-guarding, all led by subject experts who understand our sport and what we need to achieve.

We must never lose sight of the importance of the grass roots, the solid foundations of our sport. Imaginative and important development schemes have continued to take place all around the world, such as England Netball's Walking Netball scheme, offering an alternative version to less mobile netballers who still want to enjoy the game, and Netball Australia's support of the Pacific Women's Leadership Program. This is a joint initiative between Netball Australia, the International Cricket Council and Cricket Australia made possible through Australian Government funding and provides opportunities for netballers in Pacific Island countries to develop leadership skills through sport.

The INF is committed to supporting sports development and to recognising the vital contribution of volunteers, members, sponsors and government funders who help grow our sport. We are so grateful for all the important work carried out throughout the world and as an organisation are continuing to build on the implementation of the Netball World Development Programme, to bring in much-needed funds specifically to support and help co-ordinate this activity. In order to achieve

this, we are pleased to announce we have engaged a fund-raising co-ordinator to roll out this programme.

Ambition requires support, and we have been fortunate to renew our very successful relationship with Gilbert, with another four-year sponsorship agreement. Gilbert understands sport, and understands netball, and I am pleased that they are keen to work alongside us to make netball grow and develop even further.

Last year also saw the implementation of new Rules, following on from the hard work and effort put in by the Rules Advisory Panel. Rules books for both netball, and Fast5 netball have now been produced. Work on producing the Intermediate Coaching Manual and Coaching Cards has been carried out by the Coaching Advisory Panel and I'd like to thank everyone involved on both Panels for their outstanding commitment to producing these vital resources for netballers everywhere.

We ended last year with the explosive Fast5 Netball World Series staged in Melbourne, Australia, for the very first time. The event, featuring the top six netballing nations, was won by New Zealand, and was a fabulous example of how thrilling this TV-friendly, all-action, shortened version of netball can be. It was also a fitting opportunity for me to present Mwai Kumwenda with her IWGA Athlete of the Year Award, in front of an incredibly supportive arena of fans.

Much of what was achieved in 2016 was putting in the groundwork to an exciting year of top-quality netball in 2017. In addition to our first Netball World Youth Cup here in Botswana, we have another incredible Fast5 Netball World Series taking place again in Melbourne in October.

We then look forward to the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia next April. I visited Gold Coast last year with our CEO to see the progress being made, I am delighted and confident to say that netball will enjoy a fantastic Games, with excellent organisation and first-class facilities. I look forward to welcoming many netball fans there to support this hugely important event for our sport.

New, enhanced communications are helping us share netball's successes with our friends and supporters, through our vibrant new website, important INF resource materials and constantly improving digital communications. We are reaching out to all our followers in the way they want and in the manner in which they respond to best.

We are hoping to livestream our first Netball World Youth Cup all around the world throughout the tournament, ensuring netball fans everywhere can follow their teams and see the games live as they

happen. This will be brought to a global netball audience through collaboration with our digital partner QTV, Tsena and Botswana TV, working together with INF communications, the LOC, and Anita Navin, who will be commentating.

It will be clear that we have taken our shared vision to heart, and that the INF is 'Governing with Integrity', working to 'Empower through Netball', and showcasing the sport through 'Thrilling World Class Events'.

I would like to thank the following for their support during the past two years – the Board, the Secretariat, our Panels and Committees, our technical officials, our Members, our commercial partners and our amazing volunteers.

And a special thank you must go to the organising committee here in Gaborone for helping to organise our Congress, and for hosting what I'm sure will be a memorable Netball World Youth Cup.

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For further information, please contact:

Nikki Richardson, Head of Communications: 0044 (0) 161 234 6515,
nikki.richardson@netball.org

Notes for Editors

International Netball Federation

Over 20 million people play netball around the world, in more than 80 countries. The International Netball Federation (INF) is the sole, internationally recognised, governing body for netball, affiliated to SportAccord, the International World Games Association and the Association of Recognised International Sports Federations, receiving funding from the International Olympic Committee.

Currently, 73 National Netball Associations are affiliated to the INF, grouped into five Regions - Africa, Asia, Americas, Europe and Oceania - each with a respective Regional Federation.

Image: The Honourable Molly Rhone OJ, CD, President of the International Netball Federation addresses Congress Members. BenDan Photography.