

Slalom and Women Canoe Sprint and Slalom on the XVII Pan American Games, Toronto 2015

Accomplishing objectives:

As President of the Pan American Canoe Confederation, (COPAC) I am pleased to announce that the Pan American Sports Organisation (PASO) approved:

- The inclusion of the Canoe-Kayak Slalom discipline, and,
- The Sprint and Slalom Competition Programmes submitted by COPAC for the **“XVII Pan American Games, Toronto2015”** with the inclusion of the C1 women event for both disciplines.

COPAC is a pioneer in the World, promoting and including the canoe women events; first as exhibitions later on the programme; and since now on it becomes part of the Programme of the Pan American Games.

The NFs of the Americas that have not yet incorporated canoe women, are once again strongly encouraged to take the necessary actions in order to grant the rights of their girls and women athletes, providing to them the opportunity to participate at all competition levels.

The Pan American Games, Toronto 2015, are only two years away, and the athletes need your prompt actions to participate of their Games.

As COPAC President and restless advocate for the women rights, I would like to express my gratitude for this opportunity, to the authorities of ODEPA, Organising Committee of Toronto 2015, COPAC and ICF.

From a global perspective this inclusion on the second biggest Games after the Olympic Games, constitutes an advance towards the Olympic Games; but one continent does not make the Games; therefore a consistent work needs to be done by the others; and a coordinated job can be fruitful with the necessary commitment between Continents.

The quotas for the Olympic Games are limited and the replacement of one event by another one requires a sport political decision based on facts. To make it simple and understandable, we should wonder, in case no more quotas would be allocated, how strong an event should be in order to replace another one.

The Olympic programme is being refreshed providing first of all opportunities to the athletes, seeking for universality and excellence but also bringing excitement and understanding of the sport to the spectators. We pursue the gender equity but there is no point in asking for equal number of events for men and for women if that concept is empty.

The work ahead is challenging; especially on the developing nations of the Americas, which are the majority. We cannot disregard the fact that while many girls and women have plenty of opportunities to develop their potential, there are many more for which to access the sport might represent a secured plate of food every day and a protective barrier against women traffic and all sort of aberrations. While some girls and women find a more propitious environment, other struggle just for having an opportunity.

Efforts had been made but it still lacks the understanding that a change is a process that requires time and a sustained work in order to elevate quality and increase the number and the actual involvement of the National and International Federations.

There is an enormous effort from the women canoe paddlers and their Federation's leaders in some cases but on the other hand, small or no support from the Federations that are attached to the traditional format of competitions; especially considering the cases on which there are no women on positions of decision

The women perspective is not just interesting but necessary and unfortunately the access of women to real- actual positions of decisions is still being blocked.

It is important to defeat rejection and help to understand that the canoe-kayak sport is dynamic and as such needs to get out of the box and be reviewed in terms of gender and universality participation; providing opportunities also to the minorities and being a vehicle for a better life for the youth, both women and men.

To be culturally aware is also crucial in order to succeed in incorporating women to the sport, making the sport environment welcoming for women from different cultures and religions. That is possible and absolutely enjoyable.

Last, I would like to thank to you all girls and women in canoe for challenging yourselves in your quest for excellence.

Dr. Cecilia Liliana Farias
President of the Pan American Canoe Federation