

June 28, 2021

STATEMENT: It is not yet too late. Based on scientific evidence and respect for basic human rights, the Government of Japan and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government must immediately request the IOC to cancel the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics and show the path to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive Board Meeting, Tokyo Branch, Japan Scientists Association

(1) The history of the modern Olympics, which is a festival of international peace, must not be smeared by the coercive implementation of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics (hereafter, the Games).

The ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic is a global crisis. Numerous experts have expressed concern about the arrival of Japan's fifth wave of infection in July, regardless of whether the Games are held. In Modern Olympics, the world's top athletes gather together once every four years to compete based on the results of their daily training, and people all over the world support them with excitement and enjoy the real thrill of sports. Unfortunately, we have to admit that the pandemic has at least temporarily deprived us of the conditions of "promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity" (Olympic Charter).

First, if the Games are implemented under the current situation, even if the numbers of spectators are limited, numerous athletes and games officials from all over the world will flow into Japan, and it is predicted that more than 3 million spectators will travel and concentrate in the capital city, Tokyo, with a population of 14 million people. With the pandemic still underway, it is negligent to hold one of the world's largest events, possibly creating a new spark for the global expansion of the coronavirus. The 2020 Games should have been canceled rather than postponed, and the belated 2021 event should not smear the history of the Games, a celebration of peace.

Second, in Japan, the host country, the arrival of the 4th wave of the pandemic caused serious conditions at hospitals in Osaka and Tokyo, where large-scale hospitals responsible for emergency medical care are concentrated. The peak of the 4th wave brought woeful situations: feverish patients in ambulances were turned away everywhere, spending the night at fire departments; and those with worsening pneumonia had to die at their homes without being able to receive appropriate treatment. Despite the devoted efforts of doctors, nurses, medical institutions and health centers, Japan is facing the collapse of its medical care system. It can no longer accept the risk of the deadly spread of the new coronavirus. The Governor of Tokyo, the host city, and the Prime Minister of Japan, the host country, as the heads of public administration, must

face the reality that the lives of Japanese citizens are at stake, and must immediately apply to the IOC and IPC for cancellation of the Games. Citizens around the world who have faced the same difficulties will surely accept the cancellation from the perspective of respect for human life. And though we are sincerely sorry for the misfortune of the world's top athletes this time, we will continue to support them in their new attempts next time.

(2) The Government of Japan must frankly admit the mistakes it has made in managing the COVID-19 pandemic so far, and clarify to the people the path forward to end the pandemic, based on scientific grounds and respect for basic human rights.

The Japanese government should immediately cancel the Games and immediately correct the mistakes it has made in measure against the COVID-19 pandemic, including measures taken against other infectious diseases. To this day, the government has attempted to balance infectious disease control and economic recovery, and above all, carried out the “Go To Travel” tourism promotional campaign in the middle of the second wave, resulting in subsequent spread of the coronavirus. This is because holding the Games has been accepted as holy writ. The Government of Japan must recognize the fundamental mistakes in such measures, and immediately shift to a position that protecting the lives and health of people is the highest priority. This position is the fastest shortcut to economic recovery.

Evidence-based and consistent infectious disease control is essential to truly terminate the spread of infection. It is natural to aim for a state of herd immunity where the spread of infection is kept under control by promoting vaccination. However, given the reality of the emergence and influx of highly infectious new strains, large-scale PCR tests that the Japanese government has consistently avoided and sabotaged must be thoroughly implemented. In addition to conducting full-scale and frequent PCR tests at workplaces and in regions as needed, anyone who feels uneasy should be able to receive a PCR test at any time, free of charge. Only then can asymptomatic patients be protected and the spread of infection be prevented. Doing so under the responsibility of the Government will create a sense of security for the first time among people and open up prospects for preventing the spread of infection. It is obvious that infectious disease control based on scientific evidence will impose a smaller financial burden on the Government than repeatedly providing huge compensation to companies that have had to suspend or reduce their operations every time a new wave of infection occurs.

We urge the Government of Japan to switch to evidence-based drastic measures to end the COVID-19 pandemic.