



This matter is being dealt with by:  
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President Morinari Watanabe  
Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique  
Avenue de la Gare 12A  
Case postale 630  
1001 Lausanne  
Switzerland

## OPEN LETTER

Dear President Morinari Watanabe,

### **RE: The encroachment & misappropriation on Parkour/Freerunning**

I write following the letter of response from received from André Gueisbuhler, Secretary General of Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) dated 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (appendix 1), which was received following my email on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (appendix 2), as we had not received a response within the politely requested and reasonable 14 days.

We formally acknowledged FIG's response on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 via email (appendix 3). As part of the acknowledgement we did reaffirm that we would welcome a transparent and open dialogue, in the spirit of respect and solidarity in order to amicably resolve the legitimate and fundamental concerns we outlined in our [open letter](#) regarding the encroachment & misappropriation of Parkour/Freerunning by FIG and/or your member National Federations. We also outlined within the email that the response from FIG, in our view, is wholly unsatisfactory as it failed to address our legitimate and fundamental concerns regarding the clear encroachment and misappropriation of our sport, provide the necessary clarification requested on a number of points, nor respond to our polite and appropriate request for a meeting with FIG in the spirit of mutual respect and solidarity in order to amicably resolve the concerns outlined in our open letter. Additionally, FIG's response has now raised further fundamental concerns. To date this email correspondence has not been formally acknowledged nor received a response.

We followed our email correspondence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 (as set out above), on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 (appendix 4) with further email correspondence, as we advised in our email of the 2<sup>nd</sup> May that we would formally respond within 10 working days (16<sup>th</sup> May 2017). However, following the substantial and significant developments that had taken place in the those past ten days (of which FIG are fully aware) and additional pertinent information in relation to the now fully substantiated encroachment and misappropriation of Parkour/Freerunning by FIG and/or its member National Federations, that we were likely to issue our response later that week or the following week. Additionally, we also again fully reaffirmed, that we would welcome a meeting with FIG, at the earliest convenience (as politely requested, within 60 days of the date of our open letter - 31st March 2017) ensuring that the meeting is prefaced with an agreed and binding arbitration agreement referring any dispute to the jurisdiction of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, Switzerland. The meeting would be to formalise the clarification and understanding via of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formally acknowledge the recognised sovereignty and integrity of Parkour/Freerunning. If an MoU is not established within a further 60 days of the invited meeting or within such other period as we shall agree in writing, we further propose that any dispute arising from and/or related to the binding arbitration agreement will be submitted exclusively to CAS and resolved definitively in accordance with the code of sports-related arbitration. To date this and our previous email correspondence has not been formally acknowledged nor received a response.

As we have made transparent, reasonable and polite requests for a meeting with FIG in the spirit of mutual respect and solidarity in order to amicably resolve the concerns outlined in our open letter and this unfortunately been ignored, despite you stating the letter from FIG dated 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017 - *"I do look forward to speaking with you at an appropriate juncture and in an appropriate manner. You may rest assured that we'll be in touch again soon."*

Additionally, it has been brought to the attention of Parkour UK that FIG have sent email invitations *"only to International Federations and major International competition organisers"* (appendix 5) to meet with FIG on 31st May 2017 from 09.00 - 12.00, at your HQ in Lausanne. It has also been brought to our attention that this

invitation has now also been extended to a number of other national groups/organisations. Despite our numerous requests for a meeting (as set out above^) to be held within 60 days of the date of our open letter i.e. before 30<sup>th</sup> May 2017, this clearly demonstrates that our requests have been wilfully ignored.

I would like to address a number of points in FIG's letter:

### International Perspective

As detailed in our open letter, dated 31st March 2017 - we stated "As the recognised custodians of the recognised sport of Parkour/Freerunning in the UK and to protect and promote the integrity, rights, freedoms and interests of Traceurs/Freerunners (practitioners of our sport), our member organisations & the UK community - **as well as by legitimate extension the international Parkour/Freerunning community** - we feel that it is both necessary and expedient to provide some much needed clarification on Parkour/Freerunning, such that our sport is neither misappropriated and/or encroached upon by FIG internationally and/or nationally by any FIG member National Federations."

In FIG's letter it's stated "you do raise some wider points of principle and claim an international perspective".

Parkour UK does not "claim an international perspective"; we **do have** a fully substantiated and evidenced international perspective. Many National Federations including, but not limited to [Fédération de Parkour](#) (appendix 6), [New Zealand Parkour Association](#) (appendix 7), [Australian Parkour Association](#) (appendix 8) and [Parkour South Africa](#) (appendix 9) have issued open letters which have been emailed directly to FIG supporting the stance of Parkour UK. Additionally, a number of other national communities have reached accords to establish a National Federation for their territory, including but not limited to [Germany](#), [Switzerland](#) & [Sweden](#) - these also have been emailed directly to FIG and affirm their support Parkour UK's stance. To compliment this, a number of the founders of our sport - including, but not limited to Malik Diouf (appendix 10) have also issued open letters to FIG expressing their support for Parkour UK's stance. Furthermore, many of the Traceurs/Freerunners (athletes) invited to compete at the event [FISE event in Montpellier](#), funded by and under the 'auspices of FIG', have also issued an open letter to FIG (appendix 11) expressing their support for Parkour UK's stance, these were also directly emailed to FIG.

Therefore, Parkour UK by legitimate extension of the international Parkour/Freerunning community (as evidenced above^) do have an international perspective relating to our concerns regarding the fully substantiated encroachment and misappropriation of Parkour/Freerunning by FIG and/or by FIG member National Federations.

### UK Sport

You have claimed in your letter that: "Further while you write of having undergone a recognition process involving UK Sport, I understand from a meeting with UK Sport's Chief Operating Officer Mr. Simon Morton, that this is not the case. Your letter from Sport England on 20 October 2016 notes: "UK Sport has not been part of the recognition process due to parkour not being part of the current Olympic or Paralympic programme.""

Parkour UK held a meeting with UK Sport & our Government - the Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017 to discuss your claim. I have attached a letter (appendix 12) from UK Sport, fully clarifying their position. The letter confirms that (as stated in the [Sports Councils' Recognition Policy](#), as set out in our open letter), the UK Recognition Panel comprises nominated officers from each of the five Sports Councils, including [UK Sport](#) - therefore UK Sport has been fully involved and party to the recognition process. The recognition decision is taken in line with the Recognition Policy, which each of the Sports Council Boards (including UK Sport) have collectively agreed. The letter also details the criteria which **a sport** and **its respective NGB** must meet in order to be granted recognition status - this includes 'sporting uniqueness' i.e Parkour/Freerunning is a completely separate sport **in its own right. It is not a discipline of any existing sport or activity**

Therefore, as detailed in the letter from UK Sport - by extension, UK Sport **recognises** Parkour/Freerunning **as a sport** and Parkour UK as the National Governing Body for **the sport** in the UK.

I trust that this has unequivocally reaffirmed that Parkour/Freerunning is recognised as a completely separate **sport** in **its own right** and that it **is not** a discipline of **any existing sport or activity**. Additionally, that Parkour UK is the recognised NGB for **our sport** by the UK Sports Councils, including UK Sport.

### History/Lineage of the sport of Parkour/Freerunning & the sport of Gymnastics

The historical context and lineage that is presented by FIG within your letter, is misinformed and misrepresented.

I have attached a letter (appendix 13) from Dr Julie Angel Ph.D, author of [Breaking The Jump](#) dated 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017, which provides clarification, as well as her thoughts and views on the historical context and lineage that you

present. Additionally, Dr Angel also supports the position of Parkour UK and that of the various National Federations (as detailed above<sup>^</sup>) that have expressed their support for Parkour UK and the wider international Parkour/Freerunning community regarding the encroachment and misappropriation of Parkour/Freerunning.

It is important to note that in our open letter of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, we stated there was and is no connection and/or lineage between **the sport of** Parkour/Freerunning & **the sport of** Gymnastics.

It is widely understood, published and accepted, that definition of the sport of 'Gymnastics' is that set out in the in the interpretation section of the [statutes of the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique \(Edition 2017\)](#) which *inter alia* provides the following discrete definitions for the disciplines controlled and promoted by FIG:

'Gymnastics'	<i>The sports and/or activities of Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Trampoline Gymnastics, Acrobatic Gymnastics, Aerobic Gymnastics and Gymnastics for all</i>
'Gymnast'	<i>Any person participating in any of the activities defined In "Gymnastics".</i>
'Discipline'	<i>Any of the sports and/or activities defined in "Gymnastics"</i>
'Artistic Gymnastics' (ART) (MAG /WAG)	<i>Competitive Gymnastics performed on different pieces of apparatus</i>
'Rhythmic Gymnastics' (RG)	<i>Competitive Gymnastics performed on different hand apparatus</i>
'Trampoline Gymnastics' (TRA)	<i>Exercises performed on the trampoline and double mini trampoline or a tumbling track</i>
'Acrobatic Gymnastics' (ACRO)	<i>"Dynamic", "Balance" and "Combined" exercises performed without apparatus by pairs, women's groups or men's groups</i>
'Aerobic Gymnastics' (AER)	<i>Aerobic dance routines including gymnastics and aerobic movements</i>
'Gymnastics for All' (GfA)	<i>Gymnastics without or with competitions (World Gymnaestrada without competition) of a recreational nature covering a with range of gymnastic activities</i>

This definition of the sport of 'Gymnastics' is also understood and accepted at the highest level of sport governance/administration internationally, including but not limited to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Global Association of International Sport Federations – GAISF (formerly SportAccord).

There is no direct or indirect reference within in the defined disciplines of the sport of Gymnastics to FIG's expressed wide interest in "*what constitutes obstacles and apparatus*".

The recognised sport of Parkour/Freerunning is primarily a non-competitive sport and the sport of Gymnastics is primarily competitive - all of the disciplines in FIG's definition of Gymnastics have competitions.

The regulated approach of the sport of Gymnastics is contradictory to the values of adaptation, creativity and freedom embraced by practitioners of Parkour/Freerunning.

The historical provenance of Gymnastics that FIG have presented, embraced many physical exercises and exertion, common to many sports. However, the sport of Gymnastics with its clearly discrete, defined disciplines, prescribing specific and regulated movements or routines capable of assessment, do not encompass the principles of the completely separate and unrelated sport of Parkour/Freerunning.

The fundamental of ethos of the sport of Gymnastics is completely at variance with that of Parkour/Freerunning and the misinformed and misinterpreted historical provenance FIG has presented does not entitle FIG to encroach upon and/or misappropriate the unique, sovereign and independent sport of Parkour/Freerunning.

Additionally, as outlined in our open letter FIG do not have the legitimacy, competence and/or sporting authority to develop '*a related FIG discipline*' based on Parkour/Freerunning. FIG have publicly acknowledged that they do not have the relevant sporting authority nor powers, as set out within your own [statutes](#) and also detailed in FIG press release '[FIG decision-making bodies greenlight inclusion of a new discipline](#)' 10 May 2017, which stated; "*The inclusion of a new FIG discipline will also require modifications to the FIG's technical regulations*", which should be

submitted to the next Council meeting in 2018, together with changes to the FIG statutes, which should be put to a vote at the FIG Congress in Baku later the same year.”.

This, along with the interview of [André Gueisbuhler, Secretary General of FIG by Vestnik Kavkaza](#) (web archive hyperlink - as the original article has been removed from their website & copy provided in appendix 14), where Mr Gueisbuhler states: “*President Watanabe wants to broaden the base of gymnastics, especially to the youth. Parkour is definitely very interesting. If you study the history of parkour and obstacle races, then you will see that it wasn't invented five or ten years ago. It has a long history in gymnastics. When gymnastics began its history at the very first Olympic Games and until 1932, you will still find apparatus being used as obstacles. Gymnastics was physical education at the base. You will find in the history, that gymnastics was used also for the instruction of the soldiers. They learned how to climb walls, how deal with obstacles. So this is parkour is at the roots of gymnastics. Today it became very popular. You can see it on television, as an urban competition. What we are looking at in gymnastics are mainly two competition formats: just an obstacle course and again, an obstacle course, which we will call free style, they will do all kind of difficult elements. But you won't see something like you see today on TV or when kids are doing it on the streets. At the Executive Committee meeting in February we have decided, that we want to develop this activity as a discipline of the FIG. Of course, we will not reinvent the wheel. We are working very closely very closely with the founders of parkour. There are many groups around the world who do parkour, so we will invite all of them, we will tell them what we want to do, and we will invite them to cooperate with the FIG in order to develop this discipline into a sport. At the moment they are not organized. Their basic spirit is to be free, not to be organized. Yet they want to have competitions. But if they want to do competitions, obviously they need minimum rules and environment to make attractive competitions. I'm sure the FIG is the international federation most qualified to further develop parkour” fully substantiates that FIG are actively encroaching upon and misappropriating Parkour/Freerunning beyond established and recognised ethical, legal and moral limits, as well as being inconsistent with the established [principle of solidarity](#).*

It is not open to FIG to ignore the fundamental legitimate concerns of Parkour UK and by legitimate extension the concerns of the international Parkour/Freerunning community (as set out above^), or to be selective in its approach to consultation, as suggested in the final paragraph of your letter, by seeking only to consult with those seeking positive dialogue, cooperation and collaboration.

Parkour UK and by legitimate extension the concerns of the international Parkour/Freerunning community, expressly objects to and rejects the encroachment and misappropriation of Parkour/Freerunning by FIG and we will take all necessary and appropriate steps to protect the integrity and sovereignty of the sport of Parkour/Freerunning, our sport.

### International Federation

As previously set out in our open letter, GAISF, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) & the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) do not recognise any International Federation as governing/representing Parkour, Freerunning and/or Art Du Déplacement.

Therefore, any International Federation for Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement must and should be established by the international Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement community, via a process of federating our NGB's/National Federations - as per established and recognised international norms, on the established right of self-determination and by virtue of that right we and not FIG, as an international community will freely determine our sporting, social and cultural development. This is in accordance with our freely expressed will and desire.

Additionally, if any ‘*competition(s) and/or competitive format*’ for Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement are to be developed, this will be in accordance with the freely expressed will and desire of the collective international Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement community, via the established right of self-determination and by virtue of that right we, as a sovereign international community, and not FIG will freely determine our sporting, social and cultural development.

These principles are also fully recognised, acknowledged and understood by the IOC. We would like to draw attention to a report commissioned by the IOC by [Dr Belinda Wheaton](#) & [Dr Holly Thorpe](#) from the University of Waikato – New Zealand, titled: [Youth Perceptions of the Olympic Games: Attitudes Towards Action Sports at the YOG and Olympic Games](#) June 2016 (appendix 15). This report project critically examined youth perceptions of the relevance and significance of the Olympic Games, and the Youth Olympic Games. It focused particularly on the attitudes of participants in newer, action sports (i.e. skateboarding, surfing, BMX, snowboarding, parkour, kite-surfing), as well as the cultural processes leading up to and following the short-listing of surfing, skateboarding and sport climbing for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The 137 page made three key recommendations:

- As the IOC continues to consider new activities for inclusion (e.g., parkour, BMX freestyle) in the Olympic Games and YOG, it needs to recognize that the governance structures of these sports differ from most

traditional sports, and those with the most insights and knowledge may not be housed within the expected sporting infrastructure.

- We encourage the IOC to continue to work with action-sport specific federations (in contrast to fitting within existing IFs that may not understand and respect the unique cultural value systems and be aware of the important issues within these sports). While this will involve considerable effort (and mentoring and support) to help them learn the rules and regulations required of Olympic sports, we feel this approach has the best chance of getting 'buy in' from the core of the cultures, and thus longer-term sustainability of these activities within the Olympic Games.
- We recommend that there will be important research following the announcement in Rio 2016 to Tokyo 2020. As signalled in this report, as this news is received the International Federations will take on new roles and responsibilities working with national federations, athletes and coaches. We anticipate that these processes will be complex and political, and much can be learned from this process for future action sport inclusion into and success at the Olympic Games.

Therefore, as FIG have referred to yourselves as a "leading contributor to the Olympic Movement", as in stated your letter - based on the evidence and reports as set out above, our previous correspondence and appendices, the basis of mutual respect, solidarity and in line with established, recognised international sporting norms that FIG **and** its member National Federations respect and acknowledge Parkour/Freerunning as a sovereign sport with independently recognised distinct uniqueness and cultural status and refrain from any encroachment and/or misappropriation of Parkour/Freerunning.

### Summary

We are our own sovereign sport with independently recognised distinct uniqueness and cultural status. We are Parkour/Freerunning, we are Traceurs/Freerunners.

Parkour UK would welcome a meeting with FIG, at the earliest convenience (as previously requested) ensuring that the meeting is prefaced with an agreed and binding arbitration agreement referring any dispute to the jurisdiction of the Court of arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland. Any dispute arising from and/or related to the binding arbitration agreement will be submitted exclusively to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland, and resolved definitively in accordance with the Code of sports-related arbitration. The meeting will be to formalise the clarification and understanding via of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formally acknowledge the recognised sovereignty of Parkour/Freerunning.

If a MoU is not established within the next 60 days (26<sup>th</sup> July 2017) or within such other period as we shall mutually agree in writing, we will take all necessary and appropriate steps to protect the integrity and sovereignty of the sport of Parkour/Freerunning, **our** sport.

I continue to welcome a transparent and open dialogue, in the spirit of respect and solidarity in order to amicably resolve the concerns we have outlined above.

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on any of the above details.

Yours in Sport / Salutations Sportives,



Eugene Minogue  
Chief Executive

**cc:** Tribunal Arbitral du Sport (TAS) / Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)  
International Olympic Committee (IOC)  
Global Association of International Sport Federations – GAISF (formerly SportAccord)  
HM Government – Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)  
British Olympic Association (BOA)  
UK Sport  
Sport Resolutions (UK)

**Appendix:** 1) FIG Letter 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017  
2) email to FIG 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017  
3) email to FIG 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017  
4) email to FIG 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017  
5) email from FIG - Invitation to meet in Lausanne

- 6) Fédération de Parkour Letter 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017
- 7) New Zealand Parkour Association 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- 8) Australian Parkour Association 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- 9) Parkour South Africa 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- 10) Malik Diouf Letter 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- 11) Athletes open letter to FIG 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- 12) Letter from UK Sport 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- 13) Letter from Dr Julie Angel 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- 14) Interview with André Gueisbuhler, Secretary General of FIG by Vestnik Kavkaza
- 15) Report commissioned by the IOC *Youth Perceptions of the Olympic Games: Attitudes Towards Action Sports at the YOG and Olympic Games* June 2016

