

Decision of the World Athletics Nationality Review Panel

Application of the Türkiye Athletics Federation (“TAF”) in respect of the athlete Favour OFILI (100m/200m) (NGR): worldathletics.org/athletes/nigeria/favour-ofili-14756075

Transfer of Allegiance from Nigeria (NGR) to Türkiye (TUR)

Composition of the Nationality Review Panel (the “Panel”)

- Donna Raynor (BER)
- Cydonie Mothersill (CAY)
- Susanne van Waert (NED)

A. Executive summary

The Application by the TAF for Favour OFILI (the “Athlete”) to transfer allegiance from NGR to TUR is **not approved**.

In accordance with Rule 4.4.2 of the Eligibility Rules, effective 15 August 2022, (the “Rules”), World Athletics may, in its sole discretion, refuse to give its approval to a transfer of allegiance application if World Athletics reasonably believes that the Council imperatives set out, at Regulation 1.2 of the Transfer of Allegiance Regulations, effective 15 August 2022, (the “Regulations”) are being impinged or compromised.

Having reviewed the Application, Athlete Declaration, the TAF’s written answers (24 November 2025), the Panel member’s analysis, and the Athlete’s own replies in accordance with Regulation 2.17, the Panel considers that approval of this transfer would impinge upon and compromise the imperatives underlying the Rules and the Regulations.

The remainder of this decision is structured as follows:

- In Section B, the Panel explains why, in light of the context, the Panel has initially assessed the eleven applications made by the TAF (including the Application) together.
- In Section C, the Panel explains why it considers that the strategy underlying the eleven applications impinges and compromises the Council imperatives. In short, the eleven applications form part of a recruitment strategy led by the Türkiye government to recruit overseas talent by offering lucrative club-level contracts with the objective of inducing transfers of allegiance and ensuring the athletes become eligible to represent TUR at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. The

role of TAF as the Member Federation is, pursuant to Regulations 2.7 to 2.10, to submit the application to the Panel for approval. Such strategy impinges upon and compromises the Council's imperatives (1) to protect the credibility and regularity of National Representative Competitions (Regulation 1.2.1), (2) to encourage members to invest in programmes that identify and develop athletic talent within their respective countries/territories without fear of losing such athletes to other members (Regulation 1.2.2), and (3) to encourage young athletes to join a member's development programmes, and to make the effort and sacrifices required to excel in the sport, without fear of the member filling the national representative team with athletes recruited from other countries/territories (Regulation 1.2.3).

- In Section D, the Panel explains why it has assessed the facts of the Athlete's case, in case the circumstances of the individual might affect the analysis.
- In Section E, the Panel explains why it considers that the individual facts of the Athlete's case do not change the conclusion that approval of the Application would impinge and compromise the Council imperatives at Regulations 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, and 1.2.4 (adequate protection at all stages of athlete welfare).
- In Section F, the Panel confirms its decision, sets out who should be notified of the decision, and explains the available rights of appeal.

While the Panel has considered all the facts, assertions, arguments, and evidence submitted in the present proceedings, it refers in its decision only to the facts and evidence that it deems necessary to explain its reasoning.

Because the Application is **not approved**, the Athlete is not entitled to transfer allegiance to TAF and is not eligible to represent TUR in National Representative Competitions (e.g., World or Area Championship Events, Olympic Games, etc) or Other Relevant Competitions. The Panel emphasises that this decision does not prevent the Athlete from (among other things) competing in any one-day meetings in a personal/club capacity, or living, training and competing in TUR generally (or elsewhere).

B. In light of the context, the Panel has initially assessed the eleven applications together

In July 2025, the TAF filed applications for transfers of allegiance in respect of eleven athletes. Five of the athletes are from Kenya, four are from Jamaica, one is from Nigeria, and one is from Russia. This Application (which relates to the Athlete) is one of those eleven applications. The Application was submitted on 04 July 2025.

In investigating the Application and the other applications, the Panel understands that the TAF's applications are made in support of the Türkiye government led recruitment strategy and, as a result, the applications share many common features and should be viewed in this important context. Accordingly, the Panel has initially assessed the eleven applications together.

C. The strategy underlying the eleven applications impinges and compromises the Council imperatives

In accordance with Regulation 2.18, the burden is on the applicant member (i.e., TAF) to satisfy the Panel, on the balance of probabilities, that the facts on which the Application is based are true, and that the Application should be granted.

C.1 Facts identified regarding the background to the applications

In February 2017 the Council agreed to freeze all transfer of allegiance applications and established a Transfer of Allegiance Working Group to set new rules concerning that process. As a result, in July 2018 the Council set new rules and regulations concerning transfers of allegiance and, in doing so, established the Council imperatives set out in Regulation 1.2 of the Regulations. The decisions of the Council were notified to all Member Federations, including TAF, in March 2017 and July 2018, together with information regarding the applicable processes. The Rules and Regulations were reviewed and updated in July 2022 and, again, TAF would have received notification of those updates.

The nature of TAF's block of eleven applications is that it forms part of a government-led recruitment strategy, with direct oversight from the Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth acting through a wholly-owned government club, the Istanbul Directorate of Sport, Istanbul Gençlik Spor Kulübü ("IGSK"), to recruit overseas talent by offering lucrative club-level contracts. The clear objective of these contracts is to induce the recruited athletes to switch nationality abruptly and primarily for mercenary reasons, both on the part of TAF and the individual athletes, in order to ensure they become eligible to represent TUR at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games (i.e., "wear the flag").

The stated justification is that these recruited athletes will act as "role models" for younger TUR athletes. Funding for the programme is being provided through national lottery allocations directed to the club. The strategy has been presented as a one-off initiative which, if deemed successful, may result in increased government funding for the development of athletics in Türkiye. IGSK serves as the coordinating club for the Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth's "Talent Transfer in Athletics" Project, while TAF's role in the Ministry-led strategy and in IGSK's contracting arrangements is limited.

For the KEN athletes specifically, their transfers form part of a broader and complex government-driven infrastructure arrangement, involving the development of high-altitude training facilities for Türkiye athletes in exchange for five Kenyan athletes.

C.2 Facts identified regarding this specific Application

The Panel confirmed and noted that the Application was complete and that the determination required concerned a transfer under Rule 4.4.2 and Regulations 2.1.3 and

2.7.3 because the Athlete has previously represented another Member (Country or Territory) in a National Representative Competition.

The Athlete last represented Nigeria at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games on 8 August 2024 in the 200m and 4 x 100m Relay. However, through no fault of her own she was not able to compete in the 100m because the Athletics Federation of Nigeria and the Nigeria Olympic Committee failed to complete the registration in time. The Athletics Federation of Nigeria was notified of the Application on 03 July 2025, the day before the Application was filed, but the Panel received no reply.

The Athlete is 23 years old. The Athlete was granted Türkiye citizenship on 14 May 2025. An ordinary Türkiye passport was issued on 19 May 2025 in the USA, and the Athlete has been granted a service passport for Schengen travel and a Türkiye national identity card (not a residence card). All eleven athletes that form part of the government strategy have been granted ordinary passports. Nine already have service passports, which are for official/government travel, and can be issued in 48–72 hours and used by international-level athletes to travel on national team duty or to competitions or camps outside of Türkiye. The Athlete has retained dual citizenship and is not required to give up Nigerian citizenship.

The Athlete has been living, studying and training in Louisiana, USA. On 03 February 2026, TAF's advisors notified the Panel that the Athlete had moved her primary residence to Türkiye (specific location not stated); the Athlete had spent her holiday and free time (i.e. outside of training camps and studying at university in the USA) in Türkiye; and that once the transfer was approved the Athlete planned to move her parents to Türkiye.

The Athlete's club contract is dated 20 March 2025. Pursuant to the club contract, the Athlete will be paid: (1) USD \$10,000 per month from April 2025 until July 2028; and (2) USD \$5,000 per month from August 2028 to the end of the contract in October 2032. There are provisions concerning medical expense cover and medical checkups. TAF pays USD \$2,500 per month for six to eight months per annum for preparation support to athletes, and medal bonuses are available and paid for by the Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth.

During the Application process a number of questions were put to the TAF, the Athlete, and the Athlete's Representative. On 20 January 2026, an unauthorised announcement that the Athlete was on TAF's roster for 2026 towards the Olympic Games 2028 as part of the elite group of athletes published on TAF's website. The announcement has since been taken down but it has caused confusion concerning status of the applications at that time. TAF's explanation of the technical issues and the involvement of someone from the former administration is noted by the Panel.

C.3 Facts identified from TAF answers to Panel questions regarding the applications

The Panel considered the following asserted purposes, mechanisms and safeguards described by TAF in its 24 November 2025 answers. These extracts supplement, and where relevant supersede, the generic project summary above.

Q1 – Why national representation is essential for role-model effect

- TAF states that Diamond League/Label events are brand competitions, not national-flag competitions; youth role-model effect in Türkiye arises when athletes “compete for the flag” at World Championships/Olympics. TAF cites the Melisa Vargas volleyball example, where national-team success preceded extensive commercial endorsements and nationwide recognition for the sport and athlete.

Q2 – Non-sport social impact activations and club infrastructure

- IGSK is presented as a 100% government-owned club under the Istanbul Directorate of Sport, operating youth centres, drug-rehabilitation outreach, summer schools and dormitories. Upon approval to represent Türkiye, athletes would give talks at drug-addiction treatment units, youth centres and club events (e.g., a 2026 Track League activation with ~2,000 youth spectators). IGSK is the coordinating club for Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth for the “Talent Transfer in Athletics” Project, and IGSK will create the role models for the younger generation. It is for this reason IGSK targeted the Athlete to represent TUR to create a positive public opinion of athletics.

Q5 – Training bases for TUR athletes

- The athletes that have trained in the USA for years (including the Athlete) will continue to train where they have been successful (i.e., in the USA). Antalya, Türkiye, will serve as home and base during European competitions and off camp periods, and the families of the athletes will relocate to Türkiye for stability and education.

Q6 – Whole-sport development plan and sponsors

- The development plan is to target uplift in throws, jumps and distances; to redirect sprint-inclined youths to jumps; to attract major national sponsors (e.g., airlines, banks, telecoms); to establish a track-specific high school; and to shift from quantity to quality and create secure jobs for athletes. Success is expected to drive increased Ministry funding for athletics.

- TAF state that despite investment to date in athletics, the problem for athletics in TUR is that the talented individuals who may become great athletes are not selecting athletics and are moving to other more popular sports. The athletes’ careers and names carrying the Türkiye flag will create stronger teams and more interest from the public in TUR.

Q11 – Coaches

- It was clarified that whereas the TAF continues to hire coaches, all the recruited athletes will continue to train with their current coaches. TAF has sent a co-ordinator coach to supervise and to provide follow-up preparation systems.

Q12–Q15 – Contractual safeguards, representation clauses, and impact on current TUR athletes

- Contracts: TAF states there are no penalty clauses reducing salary for injury, loss of form or personal setbacks, and salaries are guaranteed across seven years. The athletes may leave Türkiye if desired.
- Representation clauses: IGSK is described as the Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth’s coordinating club for the “Talent Transfer in Athletics” project. Club contract provisions reflect the Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth’s goal that the athletes represent Türkiye internationally and respect duties for the National Team.
- Effect on current TUR athletes: TAF argues that incoming athletes do not displace existing elites because the investment into existing athletes continues but not in the correct talent and the talent pool is weak. In addition, the specific budget for talent transfer comes from National Lottery to the IGSK as an additional budget; the disciplines in which TAF has existing talent are not the same as the targeted disciplines for the transfers; historically (last five Olympics) Türkiye had unused quota places in the disciplines that TAF wishes to transfer the Athlete into; and success is expected to expand budgets and sponsorships that benefit Türkiye-born athletes.

C.3 The Panel’s assessment of the applications

The nature of TAF’s block of eleven applications is that it forms part of a government-led recruitment strategy, with direct oversight from the Ministry of Sport acting through a wholly-owned government club (IGSK), to recruit overseas talent by offering lucrative club-level contracts. The clear objective of the club contracts is to induce the recruited athletes to switch nationality abruptly and primarily for mercenary reasons, both on the part of TAF and the individual athletes, in order to ensure they become eligible to represent TUR at the Olympic Games Los Angeles 2028 (i.e., “wear the flag”).

It must also be emphasised that TAF already has athletes on its national development and performance programmes who are training, progressing, and targeting the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. By importing athletes specifically to fill national team positions for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, the Türkiye Ministry-led recruitment campaign directly displaces and compromises those domestic athletes, undermining their long-term pathway expectations and the integrity of TAF’s role-model strategy for young athletes. This impinges and compromises the imperatives at Regulations 1.2.1 and 1.2.3.

The stated justification – that the recruited athletes will act as “role models” for younger TUR athletes – is, in fact, inconsistent with the practical effect of the programme. Rather than encouraging young Türkiye athletes to join the TAF’s development programmes, to make the required effort and sacrifices, and to aspire to national representation, this recruitment strategy effectively signals that the national team may be filled with athletes recruited from other countries/territories. This runs contrary to the purpose and spirit of Regulations 1.2.1 and 1.2.3, which are designed to protect (i) the rights and legitimate expectations of athletes within a Member’s system, and (ii) the integrity of national representation and sustainable athlete-development models.

Funding for the programme is being provided through national lottery allocations directed to the club. The strategy has been presented as a one-off initiative which, if deemed successful, may result in increased government funding of development in athletics. IGSK serves as the coordinating club for the Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth’s “Talent Transfer in Athletics” Project, while TAF’s role in the Türkiye Ministry-led strategy and in IGSK’s contracting arrangements is limited.

The Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth’s strategy therefore directly impinges upon and compromises Regulations 1.2.1 and 1.2.3, as noted above, as well as Regulation 1.2.2 because members will not be encouraged to invest in programmes that identify and develop athletic talent within their countries/territories if other members may recruit and transfer those athletes before the first member has reaped the benefit of that investment.

D. In case individual circumstances might affect the analysis, the Panel has assessed the facts of the Athlete’s case

Notwithstanding the Panel’s finding that the Türkiye Ministry of Sport and Youth’s strategy underlying the applications submitted by TAF, as the Member Federation, impinges and compromises the Council imperatives, the Panel considers it important to also thoroughly and carefully examine the Athlete’s individual circumstances to assess whether those individual circumstances could lead to a different outcome.

E. The individual facts of the Athlete’s case do not change the conclusion: approval of the Application would impinge and compromise the Council imperatives

E.1 Facts identified from Athlete answers to Panel questions regarding the Application

The Athlete has confirmed that she was granted Türkiye citizenship on 14 May 2025. At the time of the Application the Athlete resided year-round in Louisiana, USA, to train under her coach, Dennis Shaver. The Athlete stated she intended to rent an apartment in Antalya, Türkiye during the 2025 year-end break to use during holidays and the off-season and when competing in Europe. The Athlete’s passport issuance is recorded as 19 May 2025. The Athlete’s citizenship document was not provided with the Application materials.

The Athlete also stated she intended to bring her family to Türkiye in the future due to safety concerns in Nigeria. On 3 February 2026, TAF's advisors notified the Panel that in December 2025 the Athlete had moved her primary residence to Türkiye (specific location not stated). Furthermore, that once the transfer was approved the Athlete planned to move her parents to Türkiye.

The Athlete stated that she is comfortable travelling between USA and Türkiye. She reported self-studying the language for around two months post-season, and envisaged participating in Ministry-facilitated online lessons.

The Athlete stated that the transfer aims to protect her sports career and mental health following disputes with the Nigerian Athletics Federation (including not being entered in Olympic events) and personal safety concerns (the Athlete cites continuous fear and harassment). The Athlete specifically refers to the Nigerian Athletics Federation failing her at two Olympic Games: first, a failure to conduct the requisite anti-doping tests on the team prior to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, and second a failure to complete registration in time prior to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games).

TAF stated in the Application and the Athlete stated in her declaration (signed 02 July 2025) that the Athlete has not received the support needed from the Nigerian Athletics Federation, and TAF is supporting the Athlete by financial, medical, developmental, and training means in a way that the Nigerian Athletics Federation never had.

The Athlete clarified that her Athlete Representative, Mark Wetmore, was not involved in negotiations with the club or TAF. The Athlete receives all payments directly and does not owe or pay any commissions to anyone.

The Athlete has confirmed receipt of all contractual payments to date and explained that certain payments were front-loaded with the intention of supporting adaptation and mitigating lost income. The Athlete stated that being valued and supported by Türkiye motivates her to inspire others.

Regarding sponsorship, the Athlete remains under contract with Adidas until December 2026 and will continue to fulfil her obligations while awaiting confirmation of her eligibility.

E.2 Facts identified from Athlete Representative answers to Panel questions regarding the Application

The Athlete Representative stated he was not involved at any stage (other than to provide language edits only to a letter that TAF intended to send to World Athletics), and became aware of the intended transfer in May 2025 from the Athlete's coach.

The Athlete Representative stated that he was not involved in the transfer by the Athlete and has no connection with TAF/IGSK, and confirmed that he will not charge any commission on TAF/IGSK payments.

The Athlete Representative confirmed that the Athlete felt poorly treated by the Nigerian Athletics Federation.

E.3 The Panel's assessment of the Application against the Council imperatives

Regulation 1.2.1 – Genuine connection; avoidance of mercenary switching: While steps toward integration are described (e.g., obtaining a residence in Antalya, Türkiye for holidays/off-season, and language study), the Athlete retains a residence and training base is “all year round” in Louisiana (USA). There is no established, continuous residence or day-to-day integration in Türkiye. The significant financial package elevates the mercenary risk, precedes integration, and does not yet demonstrate a genuine, close, credible and established link. There was no evidence of pre-Application connection to Türkiye, and there are limited credible indications that there will be continuous residence and day-to-day integration in Türkiye in the future.

Regulation 1.2.2 – Incentivising Member domestic talent development: Without sustained presence and contribution in Türkiye (e.g., consistent residence, language learning, community/club engagement), immediate approval may dilute incentives for domestic pathway development. Significant resources being invested in recruiting the Athlete could alternatively be invested in the TAF's development programmes and youth. Members may be discouraged from investing in programmes that identify and develop athletic talent within their countries/territories for fear of losing such athletes to other members.

Regulation 1.2.3 – Encouraging youth to join Member pathways: Role-model activities are largely contingent the Athlete being declared eligible by the Panel, and are planned post-approval. Without current integration (language, club/community engagement), the transfer does not presently act as a credible catalyst for Türkiye youth engagement. The Athlete could become a role model by competing for (and acting as ambassador for) the club IGSK; it is not clear to the Panel why a transfer of allegiance is necessary to achieve that aim.

Regulation 1.2.4 – Athlete welfare and fulfilment of promises/incentives: Structured integration safeguards (language milestones, community service, mentoring KPIs, in-country availability) are not evidenced as met. Clear safeguards should precede any approval. It is noted that the Athletes' Representative was unaware and not involved in the transfer given the role of Athletes' Representatives in supporting athletes concerning practical arrangements and support on such matters.

E.4 The Panel's assessment of inconsistencies and risk factors that support a finding that the Council imperatives are being impinged and compromised

Residence vs. reality: The Athlete primarily trains in the USA. The extent of the time that the Athlete will spend living, training and competing in Türkiye, USA, Nigeria or

elsewhere, is not quantified (and time in Türkiye appears to be limited to the off-season and holidays).

Training base vs. domestic integration: Primary training and competitions may occur largely outside Türkiye; mentorship and language-learning commitments are largely prospective rather than established.

National representation: TAF links project validity to national representation despite Rule 4.4.2 requirements. Clubs cannot place conditions in respect of international representation in National Representative Competitions and Other Relevant Competitions. This Application is a matter for the TAF and World Athletics; such project requirements places improper pressure on the Athlete and the Panel in respect of the decision-making process, and impinges the Council imperatives.

The Athlete Representative's statements regarding the Athlete's disputes with the Nigerian Athletics Federation are noted as context but are not determinative of national allegiance under the Rules and the Regulations.

The Athlete last represented NGR at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games on 8 August 2024, which is comparatively recent and heightens the mercenary nature of the Application.

E.5 The Panel's assessment of the waiting period requirement under Rule 4.4

As the Athlete has previously represented Nigeria, Rule 4.4.2(a) conditions a transfer of allegiance on observation of a three-year waiting period from the Application date. By the end of that period, Rule 4.4.2(b)(iii) requires the Athlete to have a genuine, close, credible and established link to Türkiye (e.g., through residence there). On the current facts, these conditions are not yet satisfied, and there is limited credible evidence that they will be satisfied in the future. In addition, as stated above, the Council imperatives are being impinged and compromised. Therefore, the Panel has decided to exercise its discretion to override the conditions stated in Rule 4.4.2 and refuse to approve the Application in respect of the Athlete's requested transfer of allegiance from NGR to TUR.

F. Decision, notification, and right of appeal

The Application is **not approved**. If the Application were approved, the Council imperatives set out in Regulations 1.2.1 to 1.2.4 would be impinged and compromised for all the reasons explained in this decision.

The Athlete's safety and welfare claims have been initially considered by the AIU, and the Panel recommends that they be followed up through World Athletics' safeguarding processes.

A copy of this Decision shall be sent to the Türkiye Athletics Federation, Nigerian Athletics Federation (NGR), European Athletics, and the Confederation of African Athletics (CAA), and a summary published on the World Athletics website.

In accordance with Regulation 2.22, this decision will come into effect on the date it is issued and, subject to Regulation 2.23, will be the full and final disposition of the matter. In accordance with Regulation 2.23, a Member and/or Athlete aggrieved by this decision may request reconsideration of the decision and thereafter (if the decision is maintained) may appeal to the CAS within 30 days of communication of the reconsideration decision (Regulation 4). No other challenge may be made in any forum.

Nationality Review Panel

16 April 2026