



To
Mr. Thomas Bach
President IOC - Losanna
cabinet_president@olympic.org

To
Ms. Kristin Kloster Aasen
President Coordination Commission for XXV Olympic Games
Milano Cortina 2026

and cc:
Mr. Giovanni Malagò
president CONI and Milano-Cortina 2026 Foundation
president@milanocortina2026.org

Object: Winter Olympics Milano Cortina 2026 - Bobsleigh run

Dear Presidents,

Since the presentation of Italy's candidacy for the upcoming Winter Olympics and Paralympics, the undersigned environmental protection associations have taken an interest in the IOC's proposal to primarily use existing sports facilities for this grand event.

Regarding the bobsleigh and luge track in Cortina d'Ampezzo, the project to upgrade the historic track seemed immediately unfeasible (and, indeed, it was rejected). Soon after, the intention to create an entirely new sports facility gained traction. From the examination of the initial studies and designs, its environmental unsustainability and incompatibility with the landscape of one of the most fragile alpine valleys became evident. This was further exacerbated by the lack of any environmental assessment and the cutting down of a forest of centuries-old larch trees.

Additionally, it should be noted that creating a new bobsleigh track in Italy appears even more unjustified when considering that this sport has only 59 practitioners in our country across various disciplines (Bobsleigh, Luge, and Skeleton). This number does not justify the profitability or usefulness of the facility in any way, as demonstrated by the abandonment of the Cesana facility built for the 2006 Olympic Games. As you rightly emphasized in your letter of December 29, 2023, to the Honourables Luana Zanella and Francesco Silvestri, referring to the Cesana precedent: *'The IOC firmly believes that the existing number of Sliding Centres, globally, is sufficient for the current number of athletes and competitions in Bobsleigh, Luge, and Skeleton sports'*.

After the announcement by the president of the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) and the Milano-Cortina 2026 Foundation, Giovanni Malagò, in Mumbai during the 141st session of the International Olympic Committee, and following the IOC's statements aiming to identify other international locations for sliding events in an existing and operational facility, the Cortina track project was believed to be abandoned. Now, however, the Italian government states that it considers its construction possible. The task is assigned to the Società Infrastrutture Milano Cortina (SIMICO), with a scaled-down project that was put out for tender on December 29th after the two previous bids (held in August and September 2023) received no response.



Touring Club Italiano



In this new project, the elements that would have partially mitigated its impact on the landscape have been eliminated: covering the track, cladding, and green roof of the refrigeration facility building, simplification of the track coverings, and partial burial of the track: they now intend to build a facility that is not only unnecessary but with a high environmental impact in a site of great natural beauty and rich biodiversity. This further discredits the adherence to one of the fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter: *“The IOC's role with respect to the environment is: to encourage and support a responsible concern for environmental issues, to promote sustainable development in sport and to require that the Olympic Games are held accordingly.”*

With the downsizing of the original project, the company responsible for implementing the Olympic works, SIMICO, maintains the same construction cost as the basis of the first two tenders (just over 81.6 million euros), increasing profit margins for businesses and indicating a saving on time. However, even considering the reduced timeline, it would not be sufficient for the pre-certification of the track by the deadline of date established in the Winter Olympics dossier 15th November 2024, In fact, to postpone the delivery date of the facility by more than a semester and perform the pre-certification of the track not in the winter of 2024-25 but in April 2025, with the official certification and test events in the Autumn, a waiver from the IOC would be necessary.

This however would mean putting the safety of athletes and the public at risk since the time available to pre-test the track's safety and make any necessary corrections is too close to the start of the Games.

Therefore, it is requested that the International Olympic Committee, in view of the end-of-January assessment, maintains its position regarding the unsustainability of the project. This is both considering the expected use of the facility during the Games and in light of the lack of a plan for the future.

Consistent with this, it is also requested that the IOC does not grant any extension for the certification and the conduct of test events following the construction of the bobsleigh track in Cortina d'Ampezzo, for the evident reasons related to the safety of athletes and spectators. In particular, we request compliance with what is established in this regard in the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Dossier (see attachment), where it is stated that test events are essential to ensure the proper implementation of all safety measures for a sports facility of such complexity. Specifically, the conduct of test events must occur well in advance of the Olympic competitions to allow for any necessary design modifications and rectifications of the facility.

These precautions are even more necessary for a structure like the Cortina track since it would be a new construction based on a project revised several times and with construction times compressed to the limit (from the 40 months initially planned in the Dossier to the 21 months hypothesized with the new tender in December 2023). We emphasize the indispensability of precautions and attach the precedent of the Cesana bobsleigh track (Turin 2006), for which it was necessary to modify three curves.

Finally, we would like to emphasize the issue of the facility's "legacy," which is at risk of being seriously questioned, especially due to the cuts in the mitigation interventions outlined in the new reduced version. Not to mention the costly operating expenses, not covered by any formal commitment from public entities or private entities pushing for its construction. This situation raises concerns about the potential rapid abandonment of the track, as occurred with the Torino 2006 bobsleigh track.



Trusting in the favourable acceptance of the present they offer distinguished greetings.

Best regards,

12th January 2024

Antonio Montani
Presidente Club Alpino Italiano

Mauro Furlani
Presidente Federazione Pro Natura

Antonella Caroli
Presidente Italia Nostra

Stefano Ciafani
Presidente Legambiente

Alessandro Polinori
Presidente Lipu – Birdlife Italia

Adriana Giuliobello
Presidente Mountain Wilderness

Franco Iseppi
Presidente Touring Club Italiano

Luciano Di Tizio
Presidente WWF Italia



Additional Information

(1)

(Extracted from the Milano-Cortina 2026 Olympic Dossier)

VISION AND GAMES CONCEPT

18. Olympic test events concept

Test events will be organised starting from three years prior to the Games. The venue design as well as the level of service and the overall conditions that will apply during the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be tested, **so that any modifications deemed necessary will be introduced before the Games.**

... the International Federations will be sent a request for the organisation of a major test event to be introduced in the international calendar of events.

The following principles will inspire test events organisation:

- Test events in outdoor venues will be organised, possibly starting from Winter Season 2022/2023 and mostly in the winter season before the Games (Dec. 2024-March 2025);
- Test events in indoor venues to be constructed or requiring significant renovation works will be held in the winter season before the Games (Dec. 2024-March 2025)

All the OCOG functions will be involved and will develop their concept of operations accordingly. Test events will also be **the first opportunity to complete the ‘Policies & Procedures’ to be drafted in line with a comprehensive risk assessment exercise, and to measure the capacity of reaction of the main functions (including security, transport, logistics, arrivals & departures, technologies, accommodation, medical services, spectator services, media, crisis communication, protocol, look & feel, signage, Main Operations Centre, etc.).**

PLANNED FUTURE EVENTS FOR BOB, SKELETHON, & LUGE

BOB & SKELETHON: BMW World Cup 2024/2025 or BMW IBSF World Championships 2025 (February – March)

LUGE: World Cup 2024/2025 or FIL World Championships 2025 (Jan)

(2)

Cesana Pariol

In January 2005, the FIBT and FIL held their homologation events at the track. The FIBT had no issue when they ran their events during the weekend of 21–23 January 2005. The following week, the FIL ran their events, and had several crashes. Included in the crashes were Austria's Wolfgang Linger (broken ankle and calfbone), Brazil's Renato Mizoguchi (medically induced coma), and the U.S. Virgin Islands' Anne Abernathy (collarbone). During the summer of 2005, **discussions were held among TOROC (the organizer of the 2006 Games), FIBT President Robert H. Storey (Canada), and FIL President Josef Fendt (Germany) about refitting the track for safety reasons. An agreement was reached by all three, and turns 16 through 18 were modified as such.** The track was finally modified in late 2005 in time for homologation. Test runs done by Italy's Armin Zöggeler in late October 2005 led to the track being homologated on 31 October 2005 after it had been approved by former German national team coach Josef Lenz and FIL track commission chair Klaus Bonsack.