

# ISG; World Taekwondo Federation offer olive branch to rival organisation

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By Nick Butler



**Representatives from the International Taekwondo Federation (ITF), including its President Ung Chang, have been invited to attend the 2015 World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) Championships in order to continue the recent collaboration between the two bodies.**

It follows a historic Protocol of Accord signed between the Seoul-based WTF and the North Korea-centred ITF in August in Nanjing in the presence of International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach.

Since then, there has been much dialogue between the two bodies, with the presence at the Championships, scheduled for Chelyabinsk in Russia from May 12 to 18, another positive step.

"The WTF is always looking at ways to develop and evolve taekwondo for the benefit of athletes and fans around the world and opening up our relationship with the ITF is a key way of doing this," said WTF President Chungwon Choue.

"President Chang and the ITF taekwondo demonstration team's presence at the upcoming 2015 WTF World Taekwondo Championships would be a very significant step towards uniting our global taekwondo family.

"While we are two separate organisations, we share a common history and a common passion for our great sport.

"We want to work with the ITF to ensure that every athlete, regardless of their federation, nationality, race or gender all have the opportunity to compete at the Olympic Games."



An agreement was signed between the ITF and WTF during the Summer Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing last August, with Thomas Bach watching on ©WTF

The WTF is currently the only taekwondo body recognised by the IOC but the ITF is the older body having been founded in 1966 by general Choi Hong Hi in Seoul.

Following his exile from South Korea by the Park Chung-hee administration, Choi moved to Canada and established the ITF headquarters in Toronto, moving it to Vienna in 1985.

Following Choi's death in 2002 Chang was elected as the new President of the ITF, following backing from the North Korean administration in Pyongyang.

Divisions over the years, namely with Choi's son Choi Jung Hwa and Master Trần Triệu Quân, has led to rifts within the ITF and caused three separate organisations to be established.

The ITF, which has close links with North Korea, due partly to Choi's exile from South Korea, but also through Chang, the country's only current IOC member, has been in discussions with the WTF for a number of years.

Under the latest agreement, athletes registered with the WTF and the ITF are free to compete in the other Federation's competitions, under the rules and formats of the separate organisations.

This will create "exciting new opportunities as the world's very best taekwondo athletes will have the chance to compete against one another, regardless of which Federation they belong to", it is claimed, with North Korean participation at the Olympic Games in the sport one such possibility.