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Mr. Owen—

Thank you for taking on the (corrupt) finances of FINA. Let me shed a bit of light from one who has been trapped in the system.

Until FINA puts its checkbook online, we can't possibly call it "transparency," but with all the cash FINA hands out, perhaps even an online checkbook wouldn't be enough.

You invited "aquatics experts" to try to make things "comprehensible." I am marginally an expert, but this letter has been proofread and edited by many who are. Let me try to sharpen the focus on a couple of issues.

### **The Basics**

FINA is awash in money, because the current Executive Director, Cornel Marculescu, kowtows to Russia. As long as Russia, China and non-swimming middle eastern nations are willing to pay ridiculous bid fees, we may never see another World Championship in another major swimming nation. Since the money is sitting in the FINA checkbook, and has been for years, it is clearly "not needed." We have to ask, Why the giant bid fees?

FINA (swimming) has moved up to a Tier I sport. It is now the lead-off sport for Olympic television. With that will come even more funding to FINA from the IOC. The questions you asked are spot on. Where should that money go? It has been in FINA's bank account for years. Why does an international non-profit, with a steady revenue stream, need such a huge bank balance? Where should they be spending it?

### **Prize Money**

FINA has (marginally) raised its prize money. This is a direct result of being threatened by outside organizations like the World Swimming Association (WSA) and the International Swim League (ISL). What is hidden in that number is that the ability for an athlete to support him or herself has barely increased. The increased prize money is primarily due to a dramatic increase of FINA events.

Many in Swimming would argue that funds that Swimming earns (TV rights, bid fees, etc.) are being spent on water polo leagues and cliff diving. "Swimming experts" would

advocate for splitting FINA into five, separate corporations, with FINA's only role being coordination with the IOC.

When we look at the top professional sports leagues (the NBA is the gold standard), the athletes get 50% of the revenues. It is easy to do the math. The prize money to the athletes is nowhere near 50%. It needs to get there – quickly.

The cities who pay the bid fees and the networks that pay TV rights pay for those swimmers, pay to see the swimmers who “swim at night.” That would obligate FINA to develop a sliding scale of prize money from 1<sup>st</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> place in every event. Out of 50% of the revenue from those events.

### **FINA Family Expenses**

This line probably deserves some forensic review. My experience, both as a FINA Family member and one on the other side, is that the FINA Family is taken care of via envelopes of cash. Last week I was in a meeting with a National Federation executive who corrected me when I said that the per diem envelopes were \$500. He chided me to “get my facts straight. They are \$400.” I stand corrected.

These envelopes are used to secure votes at the FINA Congress. The Executive Director has a series of dinners with each area as they arrive. He goes over the votes they will take and gives them the FINA position on these votes. At that point, he distributes the envelopes.

I must mention that per diems are totally unnecessary. FINA pays for travel, hotel, meals and even clothing for the entire meet and the meetings before hand. These envelopes of cash are strictly to buy votes.

There has to be some mechanism that converts a check into envelopes of cash. Perhaps the “marketing firm” is that mechanism.

### **FINA's Portfolio of Events**

FINA has too many events. In order to pad its wallet, FINA created events that had two, extremely negative, events. The first is that traditional, regional events (LEN Championships, European Championships, African Championships, Pan American Games, etc.) have all been devalued by the new FINA calendar. Instead of partnering with existing events, co-branding them and using them as qualifiers, FINA became a competitor with its own members.

The FINA (short course) World Cup series has swimmers jetting all over the world competing weekend after weekend, with no breaks for training. There is a way to succeed at that and it is to use Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs). Additionally, they added more sprint events to the World Cups, creating an even greater PED incentive. Sure enough, the top performer in the World Cup series is now a multi-time drug offender.

FINA doesn't need the money. One Olympic Games, one Long Course World Championship and one Short Course World Championship every quadrennial is plenty, especially if they would co-brand regional events and use them as wild card qualifiers in to their championships.

### **FINA and Anti-Doping**

Here, FINA's history is sordid. Your journalist colleague, Craig Lord, has recorded this history better than anyone else. They gave their highest honor to Lothar Kipke (East Germany) as he was injecting the backsides of minor girls in the 70s.

When the trials in Germany proved these charges, FINA did not revoke his honors, nor did they correct the medals from that era.

More recently, FINA gave its highest award to Vladimir Putin, while he was orchestrating the most detailed, national doping program since the East German days. There is a reason that both the East German and Russian details were discovered via investigations, not testing.

Today, we are using 1976 technology to try to catch 2018 cheaters. The cheaters use current technology. Additionally, we test from a menu of drugs. Any drug not on that menu is not tested for.

High Throughput Testing with Multi-Dimensional Analysis can basically spot anything in blood and urine that is not blood or urine. It is used commonly in medicine, in research, in forensics, even in food safety. It is just not used in sports – except by the cheaters.

Mr. Marculescu knows the technology is inadequate, but he uses it anyway. He also knows the testing panels are inadequate, but he uses those to his advantage. The favored swimmers who compete week after week on the World Cup series are rumored to get a “green card.” That means they will either be tipped off as to when they will be tested, or they are tested for a panel of drugs that would never be used by swimmers.

Mr. Marculescu was also urged to follow the example of Lord Coe and form an independent integrity unit for aquatics. He did not, although he could clearly have afforded to do so. Instead, he signed on with the ITA, which is anything but independent.

### **Development Activities**

In the past, “development” consisted of bringing sport politicians to expensive cities for conferences. Now, there is some effort at taking kids from third-world countries and placing them into residential academies around the world. The irony is that if “Development” was successful, there would be no need to take kids away from their families. Instead of bragging about this ‘success,’ it should be viewed as a symptom of failure.

FINA has a unique position. It could stimulate “development” where it is most needed, and likely to take root, in the world. It could incentivize the pool manufacturers around the world to develop a standard training facility for swim lessons and swim teams. A six-lane, 25m pool going from deep to shallow would be wonderful. These pools would need to be made with “off the shelf” parts, so that a pool in Nicaragua wouldn’t be closed waiting for a part from Italy.

FINA could target one place at a time. Find the right community partner. Build a pool. Start a swim lessons program. Let that lessons program feed a youth team. Let the youth team gradually develop international-level swimmers. Every year, plant one seed.

Real development would focus on ending drowning world-wide and becoming a real public health partner in the fight against the now world-wide epidemic of obesity and diabetes. Elite competitions should be a celebration of progress at the grassroots and should provide inspiration to people to use swimming and water exercise to get healthy. There should be a public good involved, not merely public dollars.

### **The FINA payroll**

I can’t think of a professional sport where the administrators make more than the athletes. This is only possible because FINA still employs slave labor (after being told by the European Commission to stop). FINA has a series of rules (GR-4) that tells nations that any athlete who competes for an outside organization will be ineligible for the World Championships and Olympic Games.

This prevents any outside event producer or promoter from developing a professional league or creating other professional events. As long as FINA is allowed to run a monopoly and employ slave labor, it can pay athletes whatever it wants. If other groups could run events, suddenly market forces would prevail.

The European Commission already ruled on this in the ISU (Speed Skating) case. In its final decision, the EC told all the International Federations (IFs) that they had to delete those rules from their rule books. In response, Mr. Marculescu sent a letter to every NF telling them that if any of their athletes compete in an “outside” event, especially the ISL, that those athletes would become immediately ineligible for FINA events and the Olympic Games.

### **FINAs Mortal Sin; Universality**

As bad as all of the above are, there is something more damaging to world swimming. It operates under the guise of something magnanimous, but it is the conduit for massive corruption and demotivation of coaches and swimmers in the very areas they are pretending to help. The program is “Universality.”

Universality is a corruption technique that FINA learned from the IOC. In theory (or in PR), “universality” is to ensure that every nation gets to compete in the World Championships and Olympic Games. On its face, that is sweet, but absurd.

We just witnessed the World Cup. Only 32 nations qualified, but every nation had an opportunity to qualify. Aquatics should be no different. Opportunity is the key word. The same thing is true in the Olympic Games. Regional Championships are used to qualify basketball teams, football teams, etc. Not every team qualifies, but every team has the OPPORTUNITY.

This is where FINA could use the regional championships for nations that do not have swimmers at the Olympic time standard. FINA could use its own "FINA Points System" to bring the best swimmers from every nation that doesn't have a qualifier, but it doesn't.

Instead, FINA uses paper entries and a very long lead time, so that entries from those nations are "appointed" (not qualified) to the World Championships or Olympic Games. How are they appointed? In typical third-world fashion, through family connections or, more frequently, bribes to the National Federation President.

The WSCA and ASCA (American Swimming Coaches Assn.) continuously run clinics around the world. At some point, in nearly every clinic, the coaches get depressed and one will say, "Why should I coach better? I already have the National Champion and he doesn't get selected, because his family couldn't afford the bribe." A swimmer might say, "Why should I train harder? I am already the African Champion, but the 8<sup>th</sup> place girl was selected, because she is the President's niece."

These coaches and swimmers work and train in conditions that no American or European would tolerate. They are passionate about their sport and work hard. They are also completely demoralized by the organization that is supposed to "Develop" the sport. FINA could end this in a minute, but perpetuating it allows their loyalists to continue to enrich themselves at home.

### **The Bottom Line**

Both the IOC and the International Federations exist because they say they do. There is no process to replace a corrupt and/or incompetent IF. It would take a massive uprising and a generation of athletes to sabotage their own Olympic dreams to even have a chance. Until IFs can be replaced, the corruption will continue.



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