

Guidelines on Handling the Playing of the National Anthem and Raising of the Regional Flag for Hong Kong Athletes and Teams Engaging in International Sports Events

Purpose

To forestall the recurrence of the misplay and mishandling of our National Anthem and Regional Flag at international sports events, thereby ensuring the necessary respect for our national and regional symbols, the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC), in consultation with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, hereby promulgates the following guidelines and measures for the strict compliance of all personnels of “National Sports Associations” (NSAs).

Background

Since November 2022, the National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams has been misplayed in different international sports events. Instead of the “March of the Volunteers”, i.e. the correct National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams, a song that was subversive in nature was played. Enquires by the relevant International Federation/Asia Federation invariably revealed that the local event organisers had downloaded the wrong song through Google search or YouTube which placed the wrong song as the top search result. Google and YouTube are hence proven to be totally unreliable in the search for the correct National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams.

Proper Handling of the National Anthem and Regional Flag

1. The Protocol Division Government Secretariat of the HKSAR Government (Protocol Division) provides on its website information on the Regional Flag and its usage (website: <https://www.protocol.gov.hk/en/flags-emblems-anthem.html#rf>). Details of the specifications for the Regional Flag are set out in Schedule 1 of the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) of the HKSAR Government provides on its website information on our National Anthem, including an official recording of the National Anthem and the National Anthem Ordinance (website: https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/national_anthem.htm). NSAs should familiarise themselves with the above and ensure that the use of the National Anthem and Regional Flag are in full compliance with the guidelines and Ordinances.
2. To facilitate NSAs in ensuring that the correct version of our National Anthem and Regional Flag are used at international sports events, SF&OC will provide a toolkit, including two hard copies (a computer disk or an

external storage device (USB)) containing the correct National Anthem together with two Regional Flags for NSAs and a standard acknowledgement receipt (see paragraph 5 below). **NSAs MUST collect the toolkit from SF&OC every time before setting off for international sports events.** SF&OC will assign a dedicated staff to liaise with NSAs on the collection of the toolkit. NSAs may use various sizes of the Regional Flag in different sports events, but they should not manufacture the Regional Flag individually and **MUST** ensure that the correct versions are used.

3. NSAs are required to proactively approach their respective International Federations (IFs) and Asian Federations (AFs) and provide both IFs and AFs with the correct version of our National Anthem with the proper description including its name, along with the specification of our Regional Flag. **Prior to each event, NSA should remind organiser to communicate in writing with its production contractors, media partners and venue management etc. to ensure that the description and name of our National Anthem, as well as the specification of our Regional Flag are accurate in the recordings and other post-event productions/publications.** Furthermore, before departure, NSAs are required to provide the organiser with the official link (and the electronic audio file if the notification is by email) of the recording of the National Anthem (website: https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/national_anthem.htm) and the correct specifications of the Regional Flag by means of a template letter (Annex I).
4. When any Hong Kong, China teams/representatives are going to participate in international events, the team leader as assigned by the relevant NSA's Executive Council or Committee should be responsible for bringing along the toolkit, including two hard copies (a computer disk or USB) containing the correct National Anthem together with two Regional Flags for NSAs. NSAs should not take or use the Regional Flag given to them by unknown parties, e.g. a spectator.
5. The team leader is responsible for passing one hard copy (either a computer disk or USB) of the National Anthem and one Regional Flag to the event organiser, who should confirm receipt of the materials in writing by signing the standard acknowledgement receipt (**Annex II**). The team leader should keep the other set of National Anthem and Regional Flag and bring them along to the event venue for contingency use.
6. **In anticipation that the National Anthem will be played and/or the Regional Flag will be raised, the team leader MUST check on site with the event organiser on the National Anthem and Regional Flag once again to ensure that the correct version will be used and the correct name of our National Anthem will be displayed in all captions.** Should the National Anthem be played and Regional Flag be raised on multiple occasions at the

sports events, the team leader **MUST** inspect all relevant materials and information before each occasion to ensure that they are in order. **If the organiser refuses to let the team leader listen to and check the name of the National Anthem or check the Regional Flag on site, the team leader MUST not allow team members to attend the sports events / awards presentation ceremonies until the checking as described above is acceded to and completed.**

7. At the time the National Anthem is being played and/or the Regional Flag is being raised, the team leader **MUST** pay attention to the song being played and flag being raised to make sure that they are in order. In case a wrong song is played, an incorrect flag is raised or the Regional Flag is not properly raised, the team leader should alert the team members and lead them to act upon in accordance with the guidelines in paragraphs 9 – 11 below.
8. NSAs should brief the team leader and members on the guidelines every time before their departure for international events. The briefing should be in a format such that all participants are able to communicate with one another and ask questions instantaneously (e.g. in-person, via Zoom, etc.).

Action to be taken by athletes/teams upon noticing a wrong song is played as the National Anthem, an incorrect flag is raised as the Regional Flag or the Regional Flag is not properly raised

9. **In case a wrong song is played** as the National Anthem of the People's Republic of China or an incorrect flag is raised as the Regional Flag or the Regional Flag is not properly raised, **the team leader MUST alert his/her team members immediately and lead the team members to use their hands to display the sign of "T" for expressing objection to the error made and call for a halt to the proceedings for immediate correction.**
10. **Should no immediate correction be carried out, the team leader will lead the full team and/or athlete(s) to leave the ceremonial venue (e.g. the field, the stage or presentation podium).**
11. Should correction be done properly, the full team and/or athlete(s) may line up again to attend the ceremony.
12. In case such an incident happens, the team leader should report to his/her NSA and the Chairperson shall then report to the designated contact person of SF&OC, i.e. Director of Operations of the SF&OC Secretariat, within two hours on telephone number 2504 8686 directly or via mobile phone number 9574 6520 during non-office hours, followed by a brief written report on the next working day after the incident.

13. **SF&OC will provide a checklist on the actions required to be carried out by NSAs as specified in the guidelines (Annex III). NSAs should submit to SF&OC before departure the checklist confirming completion of actions required before departure, and then submit the checklist again on the rest of the completed actions after the event.**

Consequence for non-compliance with the guidelines

14. **For non-compliance with the above guidelines, the NSAs concerned may be subject to sanction** after taking into consideration the circumstances of each case. Possible sanctions include suspension of membership by SF&OC and suspension of subvention or funding support from the Government.

Implementation Plan

15. A briefing session by SF&OC on the guidelines was arranged on 24 November 2022 and a subsequent briefing on the revised guidelines was arranged on 30 May 2023 for the office bearers and staff of NSAs to attend.
16. Such briefing session will be held at least once a year by SF&OC to ensure that all members, in particular those new office bearers of NSAs, are to be reminded of the importance of this subject from time to time.
17. The above guidelines will take effect from 1 June 2023 and will be re-circulated to all NSAs by SF&OC on an annual basis.

30 May 2023
(Updated in June 2026)

[Date]

Dear [name of contact person of Local Organizer],

National Anthem and Regional Flag of Team Hong Kong, China

Since November 2022, the National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams has been misplayed in different international sports events. Instead of the “March of the Volunteers”, i.e. the correct National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams, a song that was subversive in nature was played. Enquires by the relevant International Federation/Asia Federation invariably revealed that the local event organisers had downloaded the wrong song through Google search or YouTube which placed the wrong song as the top search result. Google and YouTube are hence proven to be totally unreliable in the search for the correct National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams.

To forestall the recurrence of similar mishaps, thereby ensuring the necessary respect to our National Anthem and Regional Flag in the upcoming sports event under your jurisdiction, namely the [name of sports event], we would like to provide you with the following information on our National Anthem and Regional Flag for taking the necessary actions and precautions:

National Anthem of the People’s Republic of China – “March of the Volunteers”

- Recording:
https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/national_anthem.htm

Regional Flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

- Usage:
<https://www.protocol.gov.hk/en/flags-emblems-anthem.html#rf>

Kindly ask your officials / staff / volunteers / contractors/ venue management to use the correct information provided above and refrain from downloading our National Anthem or Regional Flag from unofficial sources. This is particularly so for Google and YouTube which, as demonstrated in the beginning of this letter, are proven to be inaccurate, misleading and unreliable for searches of the National Anthem of Hong Kong, China.

If you require any clarification on the above, please feel free to contact [name of contact person of NSA] on [contact details].

Yours sincerely,

[to be issued in the name of President / Chairperson of NSA]

c.c. Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China

Acknowledgement Receipt of National Anthem and Regional Flag of Team Hong Kong, China

- I note that since November 2022, the National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams has been misplayed in different international sports events. Instead of the “March of the Volunteers”, i.e. the correct National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams, a song that was subversive in nature was played. Enquires by the relevant International Federation/Asia Federation invariably revealed that the local event organisers had downloaded the wrong song through Google search or YouTube which placed the wrong song as the top search result. Google and YouTube are hence proven to be totally unreliable in the search for the correct National Anthem of Hong Kong, China Teams.

- I hereby acknowledge receipt of the following materials from the Team Leader of Team Hong Kong, China, _____ (name),
for the _____ (name of sports event):
 - (i) National Anthem of the People’s Republic of China – “March of the Volunteers”
(official recording available at:
https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/national_anthem.htm)

 - (ii) Regional Flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
(specifications available at:
<https://www.protocol.gov.hk/en/flags-emblems-anthem.html>)

- I also agree to allow the Team Leader to check the National Anthem and Regional Flag on site to ensure that the correct version will be used and the correct name of the National Anthem will be displayed in all captions.

Signature : _____

Name : _____

Post : _____

Organisation : _____

Date : _____

Checklist on Actions to be Taken by NSAs

NSA: _____

Name: _____ Post: _____

Tel.: _____ Email: _____

Date: _____ (before departure / after the event)*

**Delete as appropriate*

	Event title and period: _____	Action completed	Remarks
<i>Before departure</i>			
1.	Collect toolkit from SF&OC.		
2.	Send the official recording of the National Anthem and the correct version of the Regional Flag to the organiser using the template letter.		
3.	Brief team leader and members (in-person / Zoom) on the Guidelines. ¹		
4.	Team leader to bring along the toolkit and remember not to use any flags given to them by unknown parties (e.g. a spectator).		
<i>After arrival</i>			
5.	Pass one USB containing the National Anthem and one Regional Flag to the organiser and ask the organiser to confirm receipt of the materials by signing the standard acknowledgement receipt included in the toolkit.		
<i>On site before competition</i>			
6.	Bring along the other set of National Anthem and Regional Flag to the venue for contingency use.		
7.	Check the National Anthem and Regional Flag with the organiser to ensure that the correct version will be used and the correct name will be displayed in all captions. ²		
<i>At all times</i>			
8.	Keep relevant records (e.g. photos, standard acknowledgement receipt, correspondence with organiser, etc.) for future reference.		
9.	If an incident happens, report to SF&OC directly within two hours and submit a brief written report on the next working day. ³		

¹ Paragraphs 7, 9 and 10 of the Guidelines, which specify the actions to be taken in case a wrong music is played or an incorrect flag is raised, are especially important.

² If the organiser refuses to let the team leader listen to the National Anthem or to check the Regional Flag on site, the team leader **MUST not allow** team members to attend the sports events / awards presentation ceremonies.

³ The team leader should report to his/her NSA and the Chairperson shall then report to the designated contact person of SF&OC (i.e., Director of Operations of SF&OC Secretariat) within two hours on telephone number 2504 8686 directly or via mobile phone number 9574 6520 during non-office hours.