

# Blog: Exciting times in the table tennis world

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It's not all about the action on the tables at the World Championships in Suzhou, as various federations meet to discuss how to help the sport continue to develop. Table Tennis England Chair Sandra Deaton explains what has been on the agendas.



Sandra Deaton

The 53<sup>rd</sup> World Table Tennis Championships are taking place in Suzhou, China this week. Alongside the table tennis itself numerous official meetings take place where the table tennis family of global administrators come together.

The AGM of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation was on Monday. My congratulations to Alan Ransome OBE on his election as Chairman of the CTF for a further four years.

The meeting confirmed the selection Surat in India as the host of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships in October 2015 and we hope our friends in Scotland are successful with their negotiations to bring the Championships to Glasgow in 2017.

The very exciting news is that the Commonwealth Games Federation is recommending that table tennis be added to the list of core sports for all future Commonwealth Games. This will not be confirmed until September at its AGM but represents a significant milestone for table tennis if it is passed.

Tuesday saw the AGM of the ITTF take place. And what a significant moment as table tennis became the largest international sports federation in the world with 222 recognised National Associations. That's bigger than football (FIFA) who have 209 and tennis (ITF) with 210. That's not bad!

The ITTF presented several of its strategies – mostly featured around a 'P5 Plan'. The stated aim is to be 'Top 5' in everything it does under the headings of Promotion, Profit Generating, Planning, Popularity and Participation – and the ITTF has gone some way to achieving that already by being ranked in the Top 5 against all other international sports federations by all online sports-ranking agencies. Just last week it was awarded the Sports Business Award for Global Popularity and Expansion.

Whilst the ITTF does not have the financial clout of most of the other big sports it did report that its finances are in a healthy state. Its new initiative of 'World Table Tennis Day', like your own National Table Tennis Day, is aimed at promoting table tennis as a sport for everyone everywhere.

We were left in no doubt that the ITTF is working hard on various initiatives to promote the popularity of table tennis globally and to improve the presentation of its events to make them attractive to sponsors, spectators, TV and players. Again, something we are striving to do domestically in England too.

So on to Thursday and I attended the ETTU Congress. There was a lot of information about changes to the European Championship format, both in terms of qualification and the event itself. The exciting news is that we will see a return to a qualification process for the European Team Championships which will provide a great opportunity to stage international matches at home on a regular basis. We will get the final details later in the year but watch this space as qualification for the 2017 Championships will start early next year.



ITTF President Thomas Weikert

There have been plenty of other meetings as well, the Swaythling Club AGM, a presentation about the World Tour (something else we've got our eyes on. . .) and an ITTF Development and Education meeting.

Not least, I was honoured to have a 20-minute personal meeting with the President of the ITTF, Thomas Weikert, to talk about current changes and developments in Table Tennis England and, from his side, changes within the ITTF.

But outside of these formal meetings I have been delighted by how many countries have come to speak to me, to ask me about our development programmes in England and with a lot of interest in the Ping! festival which seems to have a reputation of its own. The staff will help me follow up those discussions in future weeks and provide information and guidance to our friends in the international table tennis family.

It has been an exhausting but exciting week both on and off the table here in Suzhou.

**Sandra Deaton**

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