

IOF Protocol Guide

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1. Scope of the IOF Protocol

This Protocol has been prepared by the IOF to assist Member Federations and event organisers to appreciate the diverse nature of the matter and to develop a feeling for formal details to ensure the success of an IOF event.

An IOF event fulfils several purposes. At the technical level, precise rules already exist. Such an event is a showcase for the IOF as a respected international sports organisation. Therefore, an IOF event is also an important platform to promote the IOF branding.

An IOF event is a serious and challenging undertaking that requires a professional approach, particularly from those in leadership positions. It is essential that everyone involved at this level invest the time to read through the information contained herein and thereby obtain a strong theoretical base before committing themselves and others to practical operations.

Items marked with an * are only mandatory for the World Orienteering Championships.

2. Protocol Team

It is recommended that the event organising committee sets up, in the early stages of planning, a specific protocol team to take care of all protocol related matters. Proper protocol handling requires significant lead-time for the preparation of the event in general and more specifically for all official ceremonies where protocol is an important aspect.

The protocol team must check that all protocol elements of ceremonies are respected and in keeping with IOF guidelines.

In general, the protocol team assists the ceremonies team in planning, scheduling and staging the ceremonies.

3. Event Presentation

3.1 Description

Promotion must not stop with the distribution of Bulletins or the spectators' arrival at the event centre or the competition site. Everyone who experiences the event in person, by internet or through television, should be impressed with its importance and uniqueness. The organiser's aim should be to create the best possible atmosphere and visual experience at the event venue, official sites and around the Host Town or City by using design and colour.

3.2 Activities

A comprehensive venue presentation plan should be prepared. Such a plan should consider both the locations that should be dressed, as well as how they should be decorated. Decorations at the competition venue and other relevant sites should reflect the event design and be closely co-ordinated with any decorations provided by the Host Town or City or other authorities. Elements to be used include coloured materials, banners, flags and floral decorations.

When preparing the event presentation plan, the need to reflect the sponsors, in an appropriate manner, should always be a significant consideration. This is particularly important at events where there is a title sponsor.

The focus should be on two elements:

The experience of the spectators (including their approach to the competition venue)
The visual effect of the competition centre and event on television

4. Opening Ceremony and Closing Ceremony

4.1 Description

The opening and closing ceremonies represent two of the more important ceremonies of a major IOF event. Special attention shall be paid as these ceremonies are also important for the media and, hence, appropriate protocol is of importance. The opening and closing ceremonies are important as they set the atmosphere of an event and mark its opening and completion in an appropriate and satisfying manner.

These ceremonies allow the Host Country to welcome and bid farewell to all guests (the athletes and officials as well as the spectators). They also provide opportunities for the display of national or local identity and creativity.

It is important to recognise that the opening ceremony gives a first indication and feeling about the level of organisation of the event. In this context, all national teams are expected to have significant representation at both the opening and closing ceremonies.

Ideally, the IOF would like to see all athletes present at both the opening and closing ceremonies but this may be unrealistic or difficult, depending upon the competition schedule of the event. Therefore, the organisers shall plan the opening ceremony at an early stage of the event concept to encourage and maximise athlete presence at both the opening and closing ceremonies. Even without mandatory requirements, the organiser shall request a full complement of athletes and teams to be present at these ceremonies. Because there is such a wide variety of ways that these ceremonies can be staged, it is only possible to give general guidance for planning such ceremonies. Close contact should be kept between the organisers and the IOF at all stages of the development of ideas for the ceremonies, especially if the organisers have in mind to create something elaborate or unusual. The opening and closing ceremonies are part of the IOF Event Adviser's out-of-forest brief and responsibility.

The closing ceremony also requires careful planning when developing the concept. Too often there are no spectators present at this important point of the event. The organisers shall seek a concept that is as attractive as possible for many people (athletes, media, spectators, staff, etc.) to remain until the end. Otherwise the dignity of the ceremony is easily jeopardised. The closing ceremony should therefore take place before the final award ceremony.

4.2 Protocol Opening Ceremony

A well-designed opening ceremony should combine elements of national/local identity and an artistic/cultural presentation with official protocol (sequence, flags, anthem, speeches etc). The protocol can be summarised as follows:

Entrance of the delegations in their approved uniforms (athletes, team officials)
Welcome Speech by the President of the local organising committee(maximum 3 minutes)
Short welcome speech by the IOF nominated representative (at WOC the IOF President, below)
*Speech by the IOF President (maximum 3 minutes)
*Opening of the IOF Event by the Head of State or his or her representative or the IOF President
Hoisting of the IOF flag while music is played

The duration of the whole ceremony must not exceed 45 minutes for World Championships and should be less for other events. The opening ceremony may be conducted in a town or market square or other suitable location in the Host Town or City so that it attracts the local population and enhances its identification with the event.

The concept of the ceremony should also take into account the needs of the athletes. Those that participate must not be required to stand for a long time in either the assembly area or the arena. They must also have the opportunity to watch the major part, if not all, of the ceremony.

4.3 Protocol Closing Ceremony

Though a less formal occasion than the opening ceremony, the closing ceremony of an event does have a specific protocol sequence (flags, anthem, speeches etc) that must be observed. This can be summarised as follows:

Entrance of the delegations - athletes, team officials - in their approved uniforms
Thank you speech by the nominated IOF representative (at WOC the IOF President, below)
*Speech by the IOF President (maximum 3 minutes)
Lowering of the IOF flag while music is played
*Handing over of the IOF flag to the representative of the Host Town or City of the next edition of the particular event
Departure of the delegations.

The remainder of the ceremony is a moment of relief and joy for the participants mixed with the sadness of farewell but also looks forward to the next event. It is also the forum to thank the athletes for their performances, the organisers for their efforts and the spectators for their support.

5. Flags

The international nature of a major IOF event is symbolised by the use of flags as protocol, formal recognition and decoration and is an important part of the programme and presentation. Because of the identities and ideals that flags represent, strict protocol must be observed.

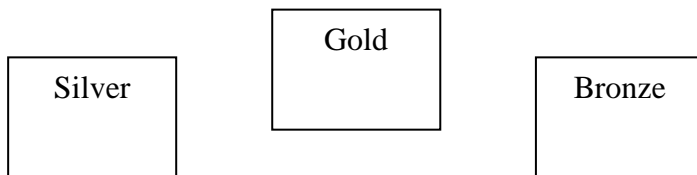
5.1 Protocol

When viewed from the front, flags should be displayed from the left to the right at the point of honour. The order of the flags should be as follows (from the left to the right)

The flag of the IOF
The flag of the host city
The flag with the logo of the event
The flags of the participating nations in alphabetical order according to the official IOF acronyms:
<https://eventor.orienteering.org/Federations>
The flag of the host nation

The quality of the material of the flag has to be appropriate for its use. There are different qualities to consider for indoor or outdoor flags.

All flags at victory ceremonies (indoor and outdoor) will be raised in the horizontal format. Flags will be raised in the following formation when viewed from the athletes' position on the medals podium



If a tie occurs, two flags may be flown from the same pole during medal ceremonies. The flags will be hung in alphabetical order according to the official IOF acronyms: <https://eventor.orienteering.org/Federations> from the top to the bottom. Two flags should not be flown from the same pole under any other circumstances.

Protocol dictates certain etiquette when handling a flag, a nation's foremost symbol:

Flags should not be folded when carried to and from flagpoles

No flag should be in a position lower than another flag

No flag should be smaller than another

Flags should be securely fastened so as not to fall

When a flag visibly deteriorates, it should be replaced with a new one

5.2 Activities

Checking of the correct position of all flags set with reference to IOF guidelines

Frequent checking of the status of flags for the entire duration of the events

Problem solving of all issues related to flags arising during the event

Management of flag storage and supply

Collaboration with communication and media personnel for victory ceremonies

6. Award Ceremony

6.1 Description

Award ceremonies at championships and other major IOF events are extremely important to the athletes, their federations, their nations, the spectators and the television audience. They must, therefore, be carefully planned and conducted in a dignified manner.

Award ceremonies can be organised in one or two parts:

1) a direct medal ceremony in the arena, or

2) a provisional ceremony [flower ceremony] in the arena and a medal ceremony later at the event venue (town/city) official ceremony place. As flower ceremonies are primarily used for TV broadcasts and spectator interest, it is critical that these are held immediately after the competition is decided. Note: Flower ceremonies can and should in most cases be held prior to the protest time running out, unless special reasons not to do so occur.

It is very important to be able to distribute pictures of the medalists with their medals to the media as early as possible and the organiser shall consider this when planning the ceremonies. Whenever possible, the medal ceremony should take place on the day of the competition.

Under no circumstances should a medal ceremony be held in an empty stadium, however; in cases where it is foreseeable that this will happen, the medal ceremony should be planned for a more appropriate point in time, if necessary the following day.

If the medal ceremony is separate from the competition, e.g. organised later in the evening, the organisers shall make every effort possible to stage an attractive programme around the prize giving ceremony to gather as many spectators as possible. A ceremony with only few spectators jeopardises its dignity.

6.2 Protocol

Manning of the award ceremony:

*Medals are presented by the nominated IOF representative or the Head of State.
Flowers are presented by an appointed accompanying person.

A medal ceremony at the competition arena requires special thought as to the dignity of the ceremony. The athletes have various duties to fulfil after their competition (media interviews, de-briefing with coaches, doping tests, etc.). They have limited time to change their clothes. Nevertheless, each medal ceremony still requires strict protocol.

6.3 Activities

A standard pattern and duration for each award ceremony must be used. The award ceremony timetable should be published well in advance so that it is well known to spectators, athletes and officials. It should also be published in the event programme (Bulletin 4 and public programme).

The award ceremony for each race shall last a maximum of 5:00 minutes.

The organiser shall provide a list of national / local dignitaries who could be accompanying persons.

The IOF Event Adviser approves the list of medal presenters / accompanying persons.

No modifications to the final list of medal presenters / accompanying persons will be made because of the actual results.

The list of presenters must be distributed to TV (when applicable), speaker, data processing service (for graphic inserts), press, Award Ceremony Manager.

The detailed announcements and procedures for the award ceremonies are given below and must be strictly adhered to.

The flower ceremony is organised for the three best athletes or three best relay teams as reflected by the preliminary results list.¹

The medal ceremony is organised for the six best athletes or six best relay teams as reflected by the official results list.¹

Note: Diplomas for the six best athletes or six best relay teams are given out on the podium in connection with medals ceremonies.

¹ For example: If several relay teams from a nation participate but the competition rules state that only the nation's best team counts in the results list, only the best team from that nation shall be on the podium. However, if the rules state that several teams from the same nation are in the results list, then all eligible teams shall be on the podium.

Medal ceremony procedures and announcements

Time	Audio Message / Music	Action	Notes
- 10:00		Assembly of athletes and presenters	
-10:00		The Award Ceremony Manager checks all athletes to ensure the proper dress code	
0:00	Acoustic signal (fanfare/music) A piece of music is played while athletes are led to the podium	The text ' <i>Award ceremony</i> ' is displayed on the video screen (when applicable), first in English, then in the local language. It is repeated until music stops and the athletes have arrived to the podium.	1
0:30	Announcement: <i>"Ladies and Gentlemen, the medal ceremony for men's/women's <format> The medals are presented by: <Name, Title of Presenter 1></i> <i>Accompanied by <Name, Title of Presenter 2>"</i> The same announcement in the local language*	Simultaneously the athletes led by Host/Hostess 1 march in the following order onto the scene and wait behind the podium (seen from the spectator point of view): 2nd, 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, followed by the medal presenter(s) and Host/Hostess 2 (medals) and Host/Hostess 3 (flowers)	2
1:10	When the six athletes/teams are behind the podium Announcement: <each time first in English, then in the local language*> • <i>Sixth, representing <country> : <name of athlete/team></i> , • <i>Fifth, representing <country> : <name of athlete/team></i> , • <i>Fourth, representing <country> : <name of athlete/team></i> , • <i>Bronze medallist, representing <country> : <name of athlete/team></i> , • <i>Silver medallist, representing <country> : <name of athlete/team></i> , <i>Ladies and Gentlemen, the gold medallist and World Champion, representing <country>: <name of athlete/team></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete (6th) steps forward; • Both presenters step forward; Presenter 1 gives flowers • Idem athlete (5th) • Idem athlete (4th) • Athlete (3rd) mounts the podium • Presenter 1 gives medal and Presenter 2 gives flowers • Idem athlete (2nd) • Idem athlete (1st) • Both presenters step back 	3
3:30	Announcement: <first in English, then in the local language*> <i>Ladies and gentlemen, the national anthem of <winner's country></i>	Athletes turn to the flag poles	
3:40	The national anthem of (the) winner's country is played (50-60 sec.)	National flags of the 3 medal winners are hoisted	4

Time	Audio Message / Music	Action	Notes
4:40		After the end of the national anthem, athletes turn to photographers (as directed by the Photo Commissioner) Host/Hostess 3 and Host/Hostess 2 lead presenters off the infield. After max 60 seconds, Host/Hostess 1 leads athletes off.	5

*optional

Notes:

- 1 Texts must be checked
- 2 The announcements must be in English. They may be followed by the language of the host country. A different speaker should be used for each language
- 3 To save time the presenters may remain in front of the podium but move to the side of the next athlete; co-ordination of announcement and movement is necessary.
- 4 It is recommended that the national flags are raised by people with proper training, to ensure a smooth and level hoist up the flagpole. The Award Ceremony Manager must coordinate the verification of flags and anthems of each country.
- 5 Allow some time for photography.
- 6 Possible prizes by the organiser must be given to the athletes after the medal ceremony is over. They may not be handed out to the athletes on the podium.

Flower ceremony procedures and announcements

Time	Audio Message / Music	Action	Notes
- 5:00		Assembly of athletes and presenters	
- 5:00		The Award Ceremony Manager checks all athletes to ensure the proper dress code	
0:00	Acoustic signal (fanfare/music) A piece of music is played while athletes are led to the podium	The text ' <i>Flower ceremony</i> ' is displayed on the video screen (when applicable), first in English, then in the local language. It is repeated until music stops and the athletes have arrived to the podium.	1
0:30	Announcement: <i>Ladies and Gentlemen, the flower ceremony for men's/women's <format></i> <i>The flowers are presented by:</i> <Name, Title of Presenter 1> The same announcement in the local language*	Simultaneously the athletes led by Host/Hostess 1 march in the following order onto the scene and wait behind the podium (seen from the spectator point of view): 2nd, 1st, 3rd, followed by the flower presenter march in.	2
1:10	When the three athletes/teams are behind the podium Announcement: <each time first in English, then in the local language*> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Third, representing <country></i> : <name of athlete/team> , • <i>Second, representing <country></i> : <name of athlete/team> , • <i>Ladies and Gentlemen, the Winner, representing <country></i> : <name of athlete/team> , 	<p>Athlete (3rd) mounts the podium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenter gives flowers • Idem athlete (2nd) • Idem athlete (1st) <p>• The presenter steps back</p>	
		The athletes turn to photographers (as directed by the Photo Commissioner) Host/Hostess leads the Presenter off the infield. After max 60 seconds, Host/Hostess leads athletes off.	5

*optional

6.4 Layout of the podium

Because of the importance of the moment of an award ceremony, careful thought and planning must be given to the setting where it will take place. The design of the stage and victory podium should integrate with and reflect the event design. It is very important that the stage and podium area is sufficient in size to have room for all the athletes, the presenters and the hosts/hostesses. (In a relay competition this means room for up to 24 athletes and 5-6 others). The podium itself should be positioned to be highly visible, well-lit and such that the athletes can see the flags and the video screen at the same time. The flags have to be visible for the VIPs.

On the front-side of the podium, close to the place for the first ranking athlete, the IOF logo shall feature in an attractive size. Sponsor logos should be used as a backdrop for Flowers Ceremonies. For medal ceremonies sponsor logos should be integrated in the podium design in a tasteful manner. Decoration and other enhancements that do not interfere with other aspects of the event should also be employed to create a spectacular image.

6.5 Award Ceremony Management Tasks

The Award Ceremony Manager will be responsible for the preparation and staging of the ceremonies according to the published timetable (subject to any variations required by the Event Presentation Manager) and following the official pattern. At IOF major events, the Award Ceremony Manager and his/her assistants will ideally work from an area with direct access to the position of the victory podium and the VIP seating. The working area will include secure storage for the medals, flowers and equipment required for the ceremonies. It must also have communications links with the Event Presentation Manager, the speaker and the flag pole operators. The key aspects of managing an award ceremony are as follows:

Giving the instruction as to which flags must be used and controlling that this is correctly done

Having ready, in advance, the list of those who will present medals / flowers and assembling the appropriate individuals for the ceremony

Preparing the medals, flowers and the trays

Assembling the Host/Hostesses who will carry the awards

Assembling – in collaboration with the responsible technical person – the athletes for the ceremony

Ensuring that the dress code is followed, that award ceremony bibs are properly affixed and that no forbidden items are carried on to the stage (see chapter 7). Athletes are not allowed to bring any accompanying persons to the stage.

Contacting the Event Presentation Manager – at least 5 minutes before the award ceremony is scheduled to take place – to confirm that he/she is ready and has the names of the medal presenter and accompanying persons

It is important that the entire process is carefully rehearsed and tested several times before the event begins.

7 Dress Code

At major IOF events, it is a must to enforce proper dress and conduct code for participants of the ceremony (athletes, officials, organisers).

Dress code for athletes:

- Opening ceremony: national team uniform.
- Flower ceremonies: national team's competition uniform.
- Medal ceremonies: national team uniform (or the national team's competition uniform if there is no time to change into the national team uniform).

At Medal ceremonies, National flags, signs, sunglasses, hats, headbands, bottles and other such items are not allowed on the stage.

For flower ceremonies, organisers should strive to give opportunities for competitors to display sponsored competition equipment. Competition equipment includes such as bicycle (MTBO), skis/poles (SkiO), mapboard (MTBO/SkiO), but also compass, headband, eye-/sunglasses, water bottle, waist bag are allowed on the stage in flower ceremonies, if allowed by the athletes' national team. National flags, signs and other non-competition equipment (as defined above) are not allowed on the stage at flower ceremonies. Note: Organisers have the right to restrict athletes taking competition equipment onto the stage at flowers ceremonies if there are practical constraints.

If there is a combined medal and flower ceremony, the above protocol related to medal ceremonies shall be followed.

Before entering the stage, **the organiser shall ensure** that the athletes are correctly dressed. The organiser shall not permit any athlete to take with him/her any forbidden items.

The medal and flower presenters shall wear appropriate clothing, e.g. suit trousers and a collared shirt for a dignified ceremony.

It is important that the teams are informed in due time about the timetable of prize giving ceremonies and the required dress code. Bulletin 4 and the first team leader meeting of an event week are appropriate places for such announcements and instructions.