



For Immediate Publication

THE R&A AND USGA WORK WITH HANDICAP AUTHORITIES TO DEVELOP A SINGLE WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM

19 April 2017, St Andrews, Scotland and Far Hills, N.J., USA: The R&A and the USGA are working with golf's handicapping authorities to develop a single World Handicap System for the game.

More than 15 million golfers in over 80 countries presently have a handicap, a numerical index long used as a measure of a golfer's potential skill level. Handicaps are currently delivered through six different systems around the world.

The aim of the proposed handicap system is to adopt a universal set of principles and procedures that will apply all over the world.

An extensive review of existing handicap systems administered by Golf Australia, the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU) in Great Britain and Ireland, the European Golf Association (EGA), the South African Golf Association (SAGA), the Argentine Golf Association (AAG) and the United States Golf Association (USGA) has been undertaken.

Golf organisations from different parts of the world have also been engaged with the current handicap authorities for the past two years to help shape the proposed system, which takes into account the many different golf cultures and most common formats of play. Research conducted to date has also reviewed systems and best practices inherent to handicapping, such as course rating and administration.

A joint committee led by The R&A and the USGA has been formed, including representatives from each handicap authority as well as the Japan Golf Association and Golf Canada. The joint committee plans to announce its proposals later this year.

Martin Slumbers, Chief Executive of The R&A, said, "We have been concerned for some time that many golfers find the handicapping landscape to be complicated and can be frustrated when it is not always applied in the same way in different parts of the world.

"We are working closely with the existing handicapping bodies to benefit from their insights as we try to formulate a system that will be easy to understand and can be applied consistently on a global basis. We very much appreciate their support for this initiative."

Mike Davis, Executive Director and CEO of the USGA, said, "One wonderful aspect of golf that separates it from other sports is the opportunity for players of differing abilities to play on an equitable basis through handicapping. With one global system, golf courses will be rated and handicaps calculated in a consistent manner everywhere in the world. Removing borders to provide an easy way for all to play together is great for the game and golfers everywhere."

Key quotes:

John Hopkins (Chairman, Golf Australia) said "Golf Australia believes that significant benefits will flow to players around the world by having a global handicap platform. We are already very encouraged by how the World Handicap System is coming together."

Bob Carrick (Acting Chairman of CONGU) said, "The Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU) welcomes the R&A / USGA's initiative to develop a single Worldwide Handicapping System for the sport. We think that this is an exciting opportunity for standardising the system and for more players to

obtain an official handicap. We will be delighted to work closely with other handicap authorities to ensure a smooth implementation.”

Jean-Marc Mommer, President of the EGA declared: "It has been acknowledged that the European Golf Association (EGA), comprising 47 member national golf federations representing over four million registered golfers, has achieved considerable success to date in bridging a culturally diverse membership, and assisting the development of emerging golfing nations, with the EGA Handicap System. We are looking forward to contributing our knowledge, expertise and experience in working with The R&A, USGA and golf's other handicapping authorities in pursuing this most worthwhile task of uniting the golfing world under a single handicap system."

Geoff Taylor, President of the South African Golf Association said “The SAGA welcomes this initiative to standardise the handicap system methodology globally and which will in turn improve our local handicapping system. In anticipation of this implementation, a programme to re-rate all the golf courses in South Africa was embarked upon in 2016. While this programme presents a number of significant challenges, we believe that the benefits to golf globally and locally will be beyond measure in years to come. We shall continue to work closely with the R&A and USGA governing bodies to ensure a smooth and rapid transition.”

Paul Feeney, Board Member of the AAG said: "The AAG is committed to assisting the development of a World Handicap System. We understand that golf has become a global sport and we are very enthusiastic about working together with many other associations in the development of WHS. A lot of work needs to be done; course ratings are one of the most significant challenges for Argentina, which we are trying to address."

Notes to Editors:

About The R&A

Based in St Andrews, The R&A runs The Open, elite amateur events, international matches and rankings. Together The R&A and the USGA govern the sport of golf worldwide, operating in separate jurisdictions but sharing a commitment to a single code for the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status and Equipment Standards. The R&A, through R&A Rules Ltd, governs the sport worldwide, outside of the United States and Mexico, on behalf of over 36 million golfers in 140 countries and with the consent of 152 organisations from amateur and professional golf.

The R&A is committed to working for golf and supports the growth of the sport internationally and the development and management of sustainable golf facilities. For more information, visit www.randa.org.

About the USGA

The USGA conducts the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open, as well as 10 national amateur championships, two state team championships and international matches, attracting players and fans from more than 160 countries. Together with The R&A, the USGA governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, equipment standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The USGA's reach is global with a working jurisdiction in the United States, its territories and Mexico, serving more than 25 million golfers and actively engaging 150 golf associations.

The USGA is one of the world's foremost authorities on research, development and support of sustainable golf course management practices. It serves as a primary steward for the game's history and invests in the development of the game through the delivery of its services and its ongoing "For the Good of the Game" grants program. Additionally, the USGA's Course Rating and Handicap systems are used on six continents in more than 50 countries. For more information, visit <http://www.usga.org>.