

IOC AND OCOG ABBREVIATIONS FOR NOCs



by Bill Mallon & Ove Karlsson

It is well known that the IOC uses three-letter abbreviations (3LA) to recognize the various NOCs in its organization. It has also been known that several of the NOCs have had their 3LA change within the past decade. Notable among these have been Saudi Arabia, which is now KSA, but was formerly SAU; the Netherlands, which was formerly HOL, and is now NED; Iran, which was once IRN, but is now IRI; and several others. A list of these known changes has been published in the Swedish biennial Olympic book *Olympiaboken*. See the 2002 edition on page 352 for such a list.

But how are these 3LAs chosen? Does the IOC assign them? Does the NOC choose them? In fact, there does not appear to be any formal policy concerning them. Also, the IOC has only chosen these abbreviations since the mid-1970s. Prior to that time, abbreviations were assigned to nations by the various Organizing Committees (OCOGs) and these often were based on the national language of the OCOG, and thus the abbreviations frequently changed from one Olympics to the next.

Witness the case of the Netherlands which has actually been known by seven different abbreviations since 1952 – HOL at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics and 1956 Melbourne Olympics, short for Hollanti in Finnish and Holland in English, respectively; OLA at the 1956 Cortina Winter Olympics which is short for Olandi, or Holland in Italian; NET at the 1960 Squaw Valley Winter Olympics, short for Netherlands, in English; PBA at the 1960 Rome Olympics, short for Pays-Bas, or the French for the Netherlands; NL at the 1964 Innsbruck Winter Olympics (more on this later); NLD at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, short again for Netherlands, or perhaps the Dutch *Nederlandse*; and finally beginning in 1992, NED, short for *Nederlandse*.

The first time that national identifying abbreviations seems to have formally appeared at the Olympics was in 1952 at Helsinki. They were not used in the *Official Report*, but did appear in the Daily Programs from that year. The abbreviations were not strictly of the 3-letter style. A few had 4-letters (USSR, CHIN = China), while some had only 2-letters (Finland SF, Saar SR), and several had 2-letters separated by a dash (Czechoslovakia T-S, Great Britain G-B, Hong Kong H-K, New Zealand N-Z, Puerto Rico P-R). In 1956 at the Cortina d'Ampezzo Winter Olympics the abbreviations were 3-letter style and were used on the scoreboards and in the *Official Report*. Later that year at Stockholm, no abbreviations are used

in the *Official Report*. But at Melbourne, 3LAs were used on the scoreboard, and in the *Daily Programs*, although they are not listed in the *Official Report*.

In 1960 both Rome and Squaw Valley used 3LAs, but they were different from one another. The Rome abbreviations often were based on the Italian or French form of the national name. These were used routinely in the results in the Rome *Official Report*. The Squaw Valley *Official Report* did not use the 3LAs in the results in the *Official Report*, but listed them in a separate table.

In 1964 at Innsbruck, the abbreviations were not three-letter abbreviations in general. The national abbreviations were a mix of one-, two-, and three-letter abbreviations and appear to have been based on the international registration marks for each nation. Thus, we have D=Deutschland, NL=Netherlands, and H=Hungary, among others. There were a few exceptions – notably, Japan used JPN, not J, and Romania used R and not RO. These abbreviations were used in the Official Results and the *Official Report*. This was the last time that abbreviations of varying lengths would be used as the style of using a three-letter abbreviation would henceforth become standard.

The 1964 Tokyo OCOG used its own set of 3LAs. In 1968, the Grenoble and Mexico City OCOGs and in 1972, the Sapporo and Munich OCOGs all developed their own set of 3LAs. Thus there was no standard – the Grenoble and Mexico City 3LAs were not the same set, nor were the Sapporo and Munich 3LAs. And they were also different from 1968 to 1972.

But sometime between 1972 and 1976, the IOC began to standardize the 3LAs. The 3LAs used at Innsbruck and Montréal in 1976 were identical for the first time, and from this time on, they became IOC-based 3LAs as opposed to new sets developed by each OCOG.

This does not mean that the 3LAs would not change. As noted above, several nations have changed their 3LAs since 1976. In addition, nations have changed – there is no longer a Soviet Union, nor a German Democratic Republic, nor even a Yugoslavia as of 2003 (now officially Serbia and Montenegro – SCG is the 3LA). As the nations have changed the 3LAs have changed as well.

Who chooses them? This question has been asked of several people at the IOC Headquarters in Lausanne and a complete answer does not appear to be available. It appears that the NOC chooses its own 3LA, but it is required to submit the choice to the IOC for final approval. Thus, if

Iran wants to change from IRN to IRI, as it did, it can notify the IOC of this and request their approval for the change.

Since 1952, a full 95 nations have been officially identified by differing abbreviations by the IOC or an OCOG, usually of the three-letter style. A complete list of these follows. The nation with

the most abbreviations has been Czechoslovakia with eight, and this does not count the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the remnants of the former Czechoslovakia. After the list of all the varying abbreviations, we have listed the 44 nations that have been known by three or more differing identifiers.

| Nation | 52S | 56S | 56W | 60W | 60S | 64W | 64S | 68W | 68S | 72W | 72S | 76 | 80 | 84 | 88 | 92 | 96 | 2K |
|------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Algeria | | | | | | | AGR | ALG | AGL | | ALG | | ALG | ALG | ALG | ALG | ALG | ALG |
| Argentina | ARG | ARG | | ARG | ARG | RA | ARG | ARG | ARG | ARG | ARG | | | ARG | ARG | ARG | ARG | ARG |
| Australia | AUS | AUS | AUT | AUS | AUS | | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS | AUS |
| Austria | AUT | AUT | AUS | AUT | AUT | A | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT | AUT |
| Barbados | | | | | | | BAD | | BAR | | BAR | BAR | | BAR | BAR | BAR | BAR | BAR |
| Belarus | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | BLR |
| Belgium | BEL | BEL | BEL | | BEL | B | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL | BEL |
| Belize/ British Honduras | | | | | | | | | HBR | | HBR | BIZ | | BIZ | BIZ | BIZ | BIZ | BIZ |
| Benin/Dahomey | | | | | | | DAY | | DAH | | DAH | DAH | | BEN | BEN | BEN | BEN | BEN |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | BIH |
| Bulgaria | BUL | | BUL | BUL | BUL | BG | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL | BUL |
| Burkina Faso/ Upper Volta | | | | | | | | | | | VOL | | | VOL | BUR | BUR | BUR | BUR |
| Cambodia | | | | | | | CAB | | CAM | | KHM | KHM | | | | | | CAM |
| Canada | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CDN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN | CAN |
| Central Africa | | | | | | | CAF | | AFC | | CAF | CAF | CAF | CAF | CAF | CAF | CAF | CAF |
| Chad | | | | | | | CHD | | CHA | | CHA | | | CHA | CHA | CHA | CHA | CHA |
| Chile | CHI | | CIL | CHI | CIL | RCH | CHI | CHI | CHI | | CHI | CHI | | CHI | CHI | CHI | CHI | CHI |
| China | CHIN | PEK | | | | | | | | | | | CHN | CHN | CHN | CHN | CHN | CHN |
| Congo, DPR/Zaire | | | | | | | | | COK | | ZAI | ZAI | | ZAI | ZAI | ZAI | ZAI | COD |
| Costa Rica | | | | | | | COS | | CRC | | CRC | CRC | CRC | CRC | CRC | CRC | CRC | CRC |
| Czechoslovakia | T-S | CZS | CSL | CZE | CSV | CS | CZS | TCH | CHE | TCH | TCH | TCH | TCH | TCH | TCH | TCH | TCH | TCH |
| Denmark | DAN | | | DEN | DAN | DK | DEN | DAN | DIN | | DEN | DEN | DEN | DEN | DEN | DEN | DEN | DEN |
| Egypt/ United Arab Rep. | EG | | | | | | | | | | EGY | EGY | | EGY | EGY | EGY | EGY | EGY |
| El Salvador | SAL | | | | | | SAL | | SAL | | SAL | | | ESA | ESA | ESA | ESA | ESA |
| Ethiopia | | | | | ETI | | ETH | | ETI | | ETH | | ETH | | ETH | ETH | ETH | ETH |
| Fiji | | | | | FIJ | | FIJ | | FIJ | | FIJ | FIJ | | FIJ | FIJ | FIJ | FIJ | FIJ |
| Finland | SF | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | SF | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN | FIN |
| France | | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | F | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA | FRA |
| German Demo. Rep. | | | | | | | | | ADE | ADE | GDR | GDR | GDR | GDR | GDR | GDR | GDR | GDR |
| Germany | GER | GER | GER | GER | GER | D | GER | | | | | | | | | | | GER |
| Germany, Fed. Rep. of | | | | | | | | | ALL | ALE | GER | GER | GER | FRG | FRG | FRG | | |
| Gold Coast/ Ghana | | | | | GHA | | GHA | | GHA | | GHA | | | GHA | GHA | GHA | GHA | GHA |
| Great Britain | G-B | GBI | GrB | GRB | GRB | GB | GBI | GBR | GBR | GBR | GBR | GBR | GBR | GBR | GBR | GBR | GBR | GBR |
| Guatemala | GUA | | | | | | GUT | | GUA | | GUA | GUA | GUA | GA | GUA | GUA | GUA | GUA |
| Guyana/ British Guiana | GUY | BRG | | | | GUA | GUI | | GUY | | GUY | | GUY | GUY | GUY | GUY | GUY | GUY |
| Hong Kong | H-K | | | | HOK | | HOK | | HOK | | HKG | HKG | | HKG | HKG | HKG | HKG | HKG |
| Hungary | UNG | | UNG | HUN | UNG | H | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN | HUN |
| Iceland | ISL | | ISL | ICE | ISL | IS | ICE | ISL | ISL | | ISL | ISL | ISL | ISL | ISL | ISL | ISL | ISL |
| Indonesia | INS | | | | INS | | INA | | INA | | INA | INA | | INA | INA | INA | INA | INA |
| Iran | IRN | | IRN | | IRN | IR | IRN | IRA | IRN | IRN | IRN | IRN | | | IRN | IRI | IRI | IRI |
| Iraq | | | | | IRK | | IRQ | | IRK | | IRQ | | | IRQ | IRQ | IRQ | IRQ | IRQ |
| Ivory Coast | | | | | | | IVC | | CML | | CIV | CIV | | CIV | CIV | CIV | CIV | CIV |
| Japan | JAP | | GIA | JAP | GIA | JPN | JPN | JPN | JPN | JPN | JPN | JPN | | JPN | JPN | JPN | JPN | JPN |
| Kazakstan | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | KAZ |
| Korea, DPR | | | | | | NK | NKO | NKO | CDN | PRK | PRK | PRK | PRK | | | PRK | PRK | PRK |
| Korea, Rep. of | COR | | COR | KOR | COR | SK | KOR | KOR | COR | KOR | COR | KOR | KOR | KOR | KOR | KOR | KOR | KOR |
| Lebanon | LIB | LEB | LIB | LEB | LIB | | LEB | LIB | LIB | LIB | LIB | LIB | LIB | LIB | LIB | LIB | LIB | LIB |
| Liberia | | LIB | | | LIE | | LBR | | LBR | | LBR | | LBR | LBR | LBR | LBR | LBR | LBR |
| Libya | | | | | | | LYA | LYB | LBA | | LBA | | | LBA | LBA | LBA | LBA | LBA |
| Liechtenstein | LST | | | LIE | LIC | FL | LIC | LIC | LIE | | LIE | LIE | LIE | LIE | LIE | LIE | LIE | LIE |
| Lithuania | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | LIT | LTU |
| Madagascar | | | | | | | MAG | | MAD | | MAD | | MAD | MAD | | MAD | MAD | MAD |
| Malaysia | | MAL | | | MAL | | MAL | | MAL | | MAL | MAL | | MAL | MAL | MAL | MAL | MAL |
| Malta | | | | | MAT | | MAT | | MLT | | MLT | | MLT | MLT | MLT | MLT | MLT | MLT |
| Moldova | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | MDA |
| Mongolia | | | | | | MON | MGL | MON | MGL | MGL | MGL | MGL | MGL | | MGL | MGL | MGL | MGL |

| Nation | 52S | 56S | 56W | 60W | 60S | 64W | 64S | 68W | 68S | 72W | 72S | 76 | 80 | 84 | 88 | 92 | 96 | 2K |
|------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Morocco | | | | | MAR | | MRC | MAR | MAR | | MAR | MAR | | MAR | MAR | MAR | MAR | MAR |
| Myanmar/ Burma | BUR | BUR | | | BIR | | BUR | | BIR | | BIR | | BIR | BIR | BIR | MYA | MYA | MYA |
| Netherlands Antilles | ANT | | | | ATO | | NAN | | AHO | | AHO | AHO | | AHO | AHO | AHO | AHO | AHO |
| Netherlands, The | HOL | HOL | OLA | NET | PBA | NL | NLD | HOL | HOL | HOL | HOL | HOL | HOL | HOL | HOL | NED | NED | NED |
| New Zealand | N-Z | | | NZE | NZE | | NZL | NZE | NZL | NZL | NZL | NZL | NZL | NZL | NZL | NZL | NZL | NZL |
| Nicaragua | | | | | | | NGC | | NIC | | NCA | NCA | NCA | NCA | NCA | NCA | NCA | NCA |
| Niger | | | | | | | NGR | | NIG | | NIG | | | NIG | NIG | NIG | NIG | NIG |
| Nigeria | NIG | | | | NIG | | NGA | | NGR | | NGR | | | NGR | NGR | NGR | NGR | NGR |
| Norway | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | N | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR |
| Papua-New Guinea | | | | | | | | | | | | NGY | NGU | NGU | PNG | PNG | PNG | PNG |
| Philippines, The | FIL | | | | FIL | | PHI | | FIL | PHI | PHI | PHI | | PHI | PHI | PHI | PHI | PHI |
| Poland | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL | PL | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL | POL |
| Puerto Rico | P-R | | | | PRI | | PUR | | PRO | | PUR | PUR | PUR | PUR | PUR | PUR | PUR | PUR |
| Romania | ROM | | ROM | | ROM | R | RUM | RUM | RUM | ROM | ROM | ROM | ROM | ROM | ROM | ROM | ROM | ROM |
| San Marino | | | | | SMA | | SMA | | SMR | | SMR | SMR | SMR | SMR | SMR | SMR | SMR | SMR |
| Saudi Arabia | | | | | | | | | ARS | | ARS | | | SAU | KSA | KSA | KSA | KSA |
| Senegal | | | | | | | SGL | | SEN | | SEN | SEN | SEN | SEN | SEN | SEN | SEN | SEN |
| Sierra Leone | | | | | | | SLE | | SLA | | | | SLE | SLE | SLE | SLE | SLE | SLE |
| Singapore | SNG | SIN | | | SIN | | | | SIN | | SIN | SIN | | SIN | SIN | SIN | SIN | SIN |
| South Africa | S-AF | SOA | | SAF | SAF | | SAF | SAF | | | SAF | | | | | | RSA | RSA |
| Spain | ESP | ESP | SPA | SPA | SPA | E | SPA | SPA | ESP | ESP | ESP | ESP | ESP | ESP | ESP | ESP | ESP | ESP |
| Sri Lanka/ Ceylon | CEY | | | | CEY | | CEY | | CEI | | CEY | | | SRI | SRI | SRI | SRI | SRI |
| Sweden | SVE | | SVE | SWE | SVE | S | SWE | SWE | SUE | SWE | SWE | SWE | SWE | SWE | SWE | SWE | SWE | SWE |
| Switzerland | SUI | | SVI | SWI | SVI | CH | SWI | SUI | SUI | SUI | SUI | SUI | SUI | SUI | SUI | SUI | SUI | SUI |
| Syria | | | | | | | SYR | | SIR | | SYR | | | SYR | SYR | SYR | SYR | SYR |
| Taipei, Chinese | | FOR | | | RCF | | TWN | | TWN | ROC | ROC | ROC | TPE | TPE | TPE | TPE | TPE | TPE |
| Thailand | THAI | | | | TAI | | THA | | TAI | | THA | THA | | THA | THA | THA | THA | THA |
| Trinidad & Tobago | TRI | | | | | | TRT | | TRT | | TRI | TRI | TRI | TRI | TRI | TRI | TRI | TRI |
| Turkey | TUR | TUR | TUR | TUR | TUR | TR | TUR | TUR | TUR | | TUR | TUR | | TUR | TUR | TUR | TUR | TUR |
| U.S.S.R. | USSR | USR | URS | USS | URS | SU | URS | SOV | URS | URS | URS | URS | URS | URS | URS | URS | URS | URS |
| United Arab Republic | | | | | RAU | | UAR | | RAU | | | | | | | | | |
| United States | USA | | USA | USA | SUA | USA | USA | USA | EUA | USA | USA | USA | USA | USA | USA | USA | USA | USA |
| Uruguay | URU | | | | URU | | URU | | URG | | URU | URU | URU | URU | URU | URU | URU | URU |
| Venezuela | VNZ | VEN | | | VEN | | VEN | | VEN | | VEN | VEN | VEN | VEN | VEN | VEN | VEN | VEN |
| Vietnam | VTN | | | | VIE | | VET | | VNM | | VNM | VNM | VIE | VIE | VIE | VIE | VIE | VIE |
| West Indies Federation | | | | | ANT | | WID | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yugoslavia | | | JUG | | JUG | YU | YUS | JUG | YUG | YUG | YUG | YUG | YUG | YUG | YUG | YUG | YUG | YUG |
| Zambia/ Northern Rhodesia | | | | | | | NRH | | ZAM | | ZAM | | | ZAM | ZAM | ZAM | ZAM | ZAM |
| Zimbabwe/ Rhodesia | | | | | RHO | | RHO | | | | RHO | | | ZIM | ZIM | ZIM | ZIM | ZIM |

| Nation | NA#1 | NA#2 | NA#3 | NA#4 | NA#5 | NA#6 | NA#7 | NA#8 | #NAs |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Czechoslovakia | T-S | CSL | CZE | CS | CSV | CZS | TCH | CHE | 8 |
| The Netherlands | OLA | NET | PBA | NIL | NLD | HOL | NED | | 7 |
| Great Britain | G-B | GBI | GrB | GRB | GB | GBR | | | 6 |
| U.S.S.R. | USSR | USR | URS | USS | SU | SOV | | | 6 |
| Chinese Taipei | FOR | RCF | TWN | ROC | TPE | | | | 5 |
| Germany, Fed. Rep. of | ALL | ALE | GER | GUY | | | | | 4 |
| Guyana/British Guiana | BRG | GUA | GUI | GUY | | | | | 4 |
| Iran | IRN | IR | IRA | IRI | | | | | 4 |
| DPR Korea | NK | NKO | CDN | PRK | | | | | 4 |
| Liechtenstein | LST | LIC | LIE | FL | | | | | 4 |
| Netherlands Antilles | ANT | ATO | NAN | AHO | | | | | 4 |
| Puerto Rico | P-R | PRI | PUR | PRO | | | | | 4 |
| South Africa | S-AF | SOA | SAF | RSA | | | | | 4 |
| Sweden | SVE | SWE | S | SUE | | | | | 4 |
| Switzerland | SVI | SWI | CH | SUI | | | | | 4 |
| Vietnam | VTN | VIE | VET | VNM | | | | | 4 |
| Yugoslavia | JUG | YU | YUS | YUG | | | | | 4 |
| Algeria | AGR | ALG | AGL | | | | | | 3 |

| Nation | NA#1 | NA#2 | NA#3 | NA#4 | NA#5 | NA#6 | NA#7 | NA#8 | #NAs |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Austria | AUS | AUT | A | | | | | | 3 |
| Benin/Dahomey | DAY | DAH | BEN | | | | | | 3 |
| Cambodia | CAB | CAM | KHM | | | | | | 3 |
| Chile | CHI | CIL | RCH | | | | | | 3 |
| China | CHIN | PEK | CHN | | | | | | 3 |
| DPR Congo/Zaire | COK | ZAI | COD | | | | | | 3 |
| Denmark | DEN | DAN | DIN | | | | | | 3 |
| Hong Kong | H-K | HOK | HKG | | | | | | 3 |
| Hungary | UNG | HUN | H | | | | | | 3 |
| Iceland | ISL | ICE | IS | | | | | | 3 |
| Ivory Coast | IVC | CML | CIV | | | | | | 3 |
| Japan | GIA | JAP | JPN | | | | | | 3 |
| Korea, Republic of | COR | KOR | SK | | | | | | 3 |
| Liberia | LIB | LIE | LBR | | | | | | 3 |
| Libya | LYA | LBY | LBA | | | | | | 3 |
| Myanmar/Burma | BIR | BUR | MYA | | | | | | 3 |
| New Zealand | N-Z | NZE | NZL | | | | | | 3 |
| Nicaragua | NCG | NIC | NCA | | | | | | 3 |
| Nigeria | NIG | NGA | NGR | | | | | | 3 |
| Papua-New Guinea | NGY | NGU | PNG | | | | | | 3 |
| Romania | ROM | R | RUM | | | | | | 3 |
| Saudi Arabia | ARS | SAU | KSA | | | | | | 3 |
| Spain | SPA | ESP | E | | | | | | 3 |
| Sri Lanka/Ceylon | CEY | CEI | SRI | | | | | | 3 |
| Thailand | THAI | TAI | THA | | | | | | 3 |
| United States | USA | SUA | EUA | | | | | | 3 |

Notes:

Above, NA = National Abbreviation, which we've used since in 1964 at Innsbruck, many of the abbreviations had only 1- or 2-letters, and in 1952 at Helsinki, some had 2- or 4-letters.

Belarus was initially given the 3LA of BLS, but this was shortly thereafter changed and it never appeared as BLS in the *Olympic Movement Directory* (OMD).

Bosnia-Herzegovina was BSH in the 1993 OMD, but changed to BIH in the 1994 OMD.

China did not actually compete in 1956 at Melbourne, but withdrew because of the China-Chinese Taipei question.

Kazakhstan was KZK in the 1993 OMD, but changed to KAZ in the 1994 OMD.

In 1956 and 1960, Malaysia was represented as Malaya, but the nations are not exactly the same entity. Malaya was given the 3LA of MAL.

Moldova was MLD in the 1993 OMD but changed to MDA in the 1994 OMD.

Several of the NOCs no longer exist, as follows: Czechoslovakia, Federal Republic of Germany, German Democratic Republic, the USSR, the United Arab Republic, and the West Indies Federation (Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad in 1960 at Rome).