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Statement from Hong Kong, China Association of Athletics Affiliates

The Hong Kong, China Association of Athletics Affiliates issues this press statement regarding the inaugural Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HK Section) Half Marathon, held yesterday, Sunday 19 November. During the event, officials mistakenly retrieved the finish tape before the East Asia Half Marathon Championships men's champion from China crossed the finish line. Later, when welcoming the winning women's half marathon champion from Uganda, event official accidentally allowed the East Asia Half Marathon men's 1st runner up from Japan to cross and break the finish tape. The Organizing Committee wishes to express its sincere apology for these two unfortunate incidents.

The two races were held simultaneously at the same location yesterday, with intense competition in the men's and women's categories and with finish times very close to each other. The Organizing Committee made a mistake when the East Asia Half Marathon Championships men's champion, Chinese runner Xie Dongsheng, crossed the finish line. This happened as the leading female runner from Uganda and the top two East Asia men's runners were running close with each other at the final stage of the race. When they came close to the finish point, the officials responsible for finish line pulled up the finish tape to welcome the women's overall champion. However, when they noticed the approaching nearest runner was a men's event runner and not the female one, they instinctively removed the tape. Immediate right after that, the officials set up the tape again aiming to let the overall female runner cross the finish tape. Unfortunately, with a few runners returning to the finish at the same time, the male runner, representing Japan, somehow crossed the line some 5 seconds ahead of the women's overall champion and broke the tape, denying the winning runner from Uganda the opportunity to break the finish tape.

Fortunately, the incident did not affect the result announcement and award ceremony. The Organizing Committee again expresses its sincere apologies to the affected athletes, and has conducted an immediate internal review. In future events, we hope to optimize operations to avoid similar incidents from happening again. Our congratulations again to the half marathon men's and women's champions, Geoffrey Toroitich KIPCHUMBA from Kenya and Sarah CHELANGAT from Uganda, and the two Chinese runners Xie Dongsheng and Xu Shuangshuang, for successfully winning the first East Asia Half Marathon Championships men's and women's titles.

Issued by the Hong Kong, China Association of Athletics Affiliates

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