



# International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF)



## Protocol – Rules & Regulations

(Pages 1-17 in force of April 3rd, 2016)

### SECTION 1 - GENERAL

#### INTRODUCTION

Protocol refers to formal rules that establish what is proper and correct in official exchanges. Every type of social structure has its rules of protocol, whether those rules are described in an official document or simply part of the oral tradition. Following the appropriate protocol is considered to be civilized behavior.

In ITF Taekwon-Do we have always followed protocol. It is an integral part of the martial arts, and General Choi taught us that it is extremely important. However, because we have not had a written ITF Official Protocol, the rules have been applied differently from one place to another.

The general principle behind ITF Protocol can be summed up as the application of the first of the five Tenets identified by our Founder: called Courtesy; and that means showing respect for others.

#### P1. PURPOSE

The purpose of these rules is to introduce a *uniform standard protocol* for ITF Taekwon-Do people around the world. It describes the basics rules of protocol to be applied in each particular situation, both in the class (Dojang), at promotion examination tests, tournaments and also in the social sphere.

#### P2. APPLICATION

Protocol applies to all our relations with other ITF Taekwon-Do people. However, the underlying principle of Protocol -respect for others- should also be applied in the other aspects of our lives like family, schoolmates, colleagues at work, etc.

#### P3. GENERAL RULES



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When showing respect for their Seniors, Juniors follow the rules of protocol that give Seniors precedence at all times. Seniors must accept with humility the gestures of respect from their Juniors, recognizing that they were once Juniors too, and that they were only able to reach their present rank with the help of their own Seniors.

Protocol requires that Juniors bow to their Seniors when they meet. Bowing is always initiated by Juniors, and Seniors bows in return. When greeting their Senior, Juniors must bow, unless the Senior indicates that he prefers to shake hands.

Some more examples:

- Juniors must bow before addressing to Seniors;
- Juniors must never interrupt a Senior whilst speaking;
- Juniors in presence of Seniors, sit only when invited to do so;
- Juniors never remain seated if a Senior is standing;
- Juniors always walks behind or beside a Senior, never in front, except when showing the way.

### **P4. BOWING**

Taekwon-Do ITF bowing is the traditional way to show respect and discipline in the martial arts. Bowing is not an indication of complete submission to one's Senior. It is a sign of mutual respect.

A bow can be used for different purposes. For example, it may be a greeting or an indication that a Junior would like to speak to his Senior. A bow can mean "thank you" or "I understand".

During training, before starting free sparring, step sparring or any type of exercise involving two or more people, those involved bow to each other. When finished, they bow again.



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Hugs, kisses or other gestures of any kind, within the strictly traditional martial classes in the field of promotions examination test, seminars and/or tournaments should be avoided.

It is essential that the bow be executed in full consciousness of the meaning of the gesture. It must never become automatic or be done half-heartedly or sloppily.

The following is a description of the bow that is unique to ITF Taekwon-Do:

- a. Stop moving and stand up straight;
- b. Put down anything you are carrying. Your hands should be empty;
- c. If you are wearing a hat, remove it;
- d. Place your heels together, with your feet at a 45° angle (forming a V shape);
- e. Hold your arms relaxed and slightly separated from the sides of your body;
- f. Close your hands slightly;
- g. The person who will lead the bowing shall step forward to bow and then will step back to resume position;
- h. Bend forward from the waist -never from the neck- to a 15° angle from upright. Bending by only moving the neck is considered impolite, an appropriate bow requires time;
- i. By bowing look forward to the eyes of the person you are bowing to; or the object you are bowing to, not looking to the floor.
- j. When bowing to a person (not to an inanimate object such as the ITF flag), say “*Taekwon*”. Juniors should initiate the tilt;
- k. When longer you maintain the bowing position, more respect is shown to the Senior; the Junior will always maintain the bow until the Senior straightens up.

### **P5. SAY “TAEKWON”**

It is essential that all individual members of the ITF understand the meaning of “*Taekwon*” and when it is appropriate to say it.

General Choi explained why we say “*Taekwon*” when we bow, rather than “Taekwon-Do”: “*Taekwon*” (foot and hand) represents the physical side of our martial art; so saying “*Taekwon*” indicates that the person is present physically.



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There is no need to pronounce the word “Do” because when he/she is bowing the person’s physical posture and respectful attitude are a visible demonstration of the Do.

It is important to say “Taekwon” only when bowing to a living person. Thus, when bowing to his Senior, a Junior says “Taekwon”. Never say “Taekwon” when bowing to any inanimate objects (the Dojang, the ITF flag, the photograph of our Founder, etc.).

## **SECTION 2 – PROTOCOL IN THE DOJANG**

### **P6. GENERAL RULES**

When in the training hall (Dojang) the students must follow as a general rule the following rules:

- a. It is not permitted to wear shoes in the training hall (Dojang), this includes parents and visitors;
- b. It is not permitted to enter the office of the Master/Instructor, unless you have important matters to address. Do not lean or sit on the desk;
- c. No smoking, no beverages (except water), no foods or chewing gum are allowed in the Dojang;
- d. Swearing and inappropriate words are not tolerated in the Dojang.
- e. It is not permitted to leave the Dobok or personal items in the Dojang. Help to keep it clean and tidy at all times;
- f. Students should not indulge in idle chatter in the Dojang. Silence is the rule in the training hall; this helps students to concentrate on learning.
- g. Concentration in training. Don’t do something that could obstruct the learning of others students or yourself;
- h. The Dobok should be used only when training or in during competition, never as casual wear;
- i. The belt should never touch, fall or be placed on the floor;



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- j. Is very important to understand that the belt is bound and loosed once for each training. Attached with a commitment to meet the physical and spiritual training. Break Out after the class, once fulfilled this commitment;
- k. When tidying up the Dobok or belt, the student must turn 180 degrees to the left, avoiding to be in front of the Senior, it is the only case in which the student turns his back to present a flawless look in front of his Instructor/Master;
- l. It is considered rude to touch a Senior Dobok or belt;
- m. Avoid “playing” with the Dobok or belt;
- n. Always bow before entering or leaving the Dojang;
- o. To demonstrate a greater respect, after bowing to a Senior, Juniors must first take three steps back, to retire before turning. This act should be performed in all events: classes, promotion examination tests, tournaments, social events, etc.

### **P7. PREPARING FOR THE CLASS**

Before the beginning of a training class students must take the following into account:

- a. Come to class perfectly groomed. To be presented in a hygienic manner, with short fingernails and toenails;
- b. To train in a clean and ironed official approved Dobok;
- c. To treat the Dobok and belt with respect. After class Dobok should be folded properly;
- d. Once at the Dojang, students should promptly put on the Dobok before training, the student should always dress in full uniform before the start of a training class;
- e. No jewelry, watches, or any accessory during training. May cause injury to himself or peers. They are also symbols of social difference;
- f. Students (male and/or female) with long hair must wear their hair up during training, with headbands or non-rigid soft elements;
- g. Never go to the Dojang in a drunken state or under the influence of stimulants;
- g. Before entering the Dojang, students must bow (only tilt, not say "Taekwon") facing the banner of the ITF and the picture of General Choi if present;
- h. Next, students will bow his/her Instructor/Master;
- i. Students may then exchange greetings with others present;



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j. Students arriving late to a class that has already started, before joining the group should make a bow to the symbols and the Instructor/Master before joining the group. They should remain standing in Attention position (Charyot) with their right hand up to be recognized by the Instructor/Master before joining the class. After being recognized they will bow their Instructor/Master and will enter by the back of the class, going to take the appropriate place based on their rank.

### **P8. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CLASS**

At the beginning of each class everyone must respect the following procedure:

- a. Students shall line up in order of their rank, facing the Instructor/Master and the wall where are located the banner of the ITF and the photo of General Choi, waiting in silence;
- b. The Instructor/Master also faces the official symbols (ITF flag and General Choi photo);
- c. The Instructor/Master commands to all students, who take the Attention Position (Charyot) and commands the bow/tilt to the ITF flag and General Choi photograph (without saying "Taekwon"), then the Instructor turns facing students;
- d. If there were an Assistant Instructor, he should be located to the right of the general formation (the left, looking from the Instructor/Master), facing the Instructor/Master. The assistant will be responsible for command the bow to the Instructor/Master. When they bow, everybody must say "Taekwon";
- e. The highest ranked student, shall be located at the right top of the formation (the left, looking from the Instructor), turns in the direction of Assistant Instructor and all students will turn facing the Assistant. The highest ranked student leads the bow/tilt to Assistant Instructor (always saying "Taekwon");
- f. The last protocol bowing is done to the highest ranked student (symbolizing the greeting between students and peers), which is formed at the right top of the general formation. This student will turn diagonally toward the general formation. The student who runs the greeting on this occasion is the second practitioner in the first row, which is the next in rank correlativity. This shift will take place in a single maneuver.
- g. After the above mentioned (a, b, c, d, e, f) greetings, the Instructor/Master and all students with their right hand raised, standing in Attention position (Charyot) recite the Student's Oath, or the Tenets of Taekwon-Do. After the initial protocol then the class can start normally.



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### THE STUDENT OATH

1. I shall observe the Tenets of Taekwon-Do
2. I shall respect the Instructor and Seniors.
3. I shall never misuse Taekwon-Do.
4. I shall be a champion of freedom and justice.
5. I shall build a more peaceful world.

### THE TENETS OF TAEKWON-DO

1. Courtesy.
2. Integrity.
3. Perseverance.
4. Self-Control.
5. Indomitable Spirit.

### P9. DURING THE CLASS

During every class the students shall observe the following:

- a. Students wishing to ask a question should raise their hand and waits for the Instructor/Master's permission to talk. If students are sitting, they will stand assuming an Attention position, bow and will then ask their question. After being answered, they bow and gives thanks before sitting back down;
- b. Students in need of leaving the training hall for any reason, must raise their hand and when they are recognized by the Instructor/Master, they may withdraw from the class. If they want to return to class, they wait standing in the Attention position (Charyot) in the entrance of the Dojang. When they receive the Instructor/Master attention, they bow and take their position in the formation;
- c. Students withdrawing from training must respect their row, moving out of training walking behind their line, towards the side of general formation, as a matter of courtesy to the other students. The student may never pass through the middle of the formation.



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- d. Students should avoid dropping out of the training class. It should happen only in extreme cases;
- e. Students should avoid talking to their colleagues, spectators, parents and other guests whilst in the training class;
- f. Nobody can teach other students without permission of the Instructor/Master;
- g. Students must always listen carefully to what the Instructor/Master is saying. They must always be ready to react when the Instructor gives a command, and their posture and attitude should reflect this, so they stand in Attention position (Charyot). However, when the Instructor/Master is giving explanations and if so indicated, students may remain in a relaxed position;
- h. If an Instructor/Master reaches Dojang during the training class, the Instructor in charge will stop the training in order to have all bow with respect and firmness;
- i. Students when sitting down, must avoid showing the soles of their feet to their Instructor/Master, as it is considered impolite.

### **P10. ENDING THE CLASS**

- a. Students at the end of the training class, might sit cross-legged and meditate for, at least, one (1) minute;
- b. Students will then stand up turn facing to the Senior student, located at the top right of the formation and bow saying "Taekwon";
- c. The Senior student will ask others students to turn diagonally facing to the Assistant Instructor and bow saying "Taekwon";
- d. The Assistant Instructor will lead the bowing facing to the Instructor/Master, (always saying "Taekwon");
- e. Finally, the Instructor/Master leads the bowing facing the ITF flag and the photo of General Choi (without saying "Taekwon") if present.

## **SECTION 3 – PROTOCOL PROMOTION EXAMINATION TESTS**

### **P11. GENERAL RULES**



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If there is a moment to display the Protocol in its maximum expression, it is during the promotion examination test for black belts and coloured belts. Necessary care should be taken in order to prioritize the act with special enhancement and excellence.

Therefore, this act is considered of "Etiquette", which implies that the examiner(s) should be dressed in a suit and tie color that identifies their category. The assistant/aide and examinees will be dressed in the official ITF Dobok, with the respective logos to represent their country and the ITF.

The area where the promotion examination testing takes place must have everything necessary for the test to be conducted properly. In particular, the logo of the ITF and the respective national organization should be on display.

### **P12. PROCEDURE**

- a. There shall be a Board of Examiners, chaired by the most Senior person;
- b. Should be appointed an Assistant or Helper;
- c. The Assistant will be responsible for enforcing the protocol from the beginning to the end of the promotion examination test;
- d. If is a public examination, the Assistant will be responsible for ensuring that observers keep silent, that cell phones are turned off or on silent mode and that no people are moving during the promotion examination test, and checking that there are no conversations or unnecessary inconvenience, in order to preserve the concentration of examinees;
- e. Is not permitted to the public to attend the promotion examination test with minor children, pets of any kind or anything that may cause noise, nuisance or to decentralize the examinees;
- f. The Assistant may invite to leave the place to all those who do not follow these rules, and, in extreme cases make the promotion examination test private, previous consultation and authorization of the President of the examining board;
- g. The Assistant will organize the lining up of the examinees, before the examiners come in;
- h. After protocol of the bowing procedure, as specified for Class Initiation Protocol: Section 2, P8, the promotion examination test will begin;



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- i. The orders given from the Examining Committee should be channeled through the Assistant;
- j. The Examining Committee members will avoid, if possible, to speak directly to the examinees, except in very special cases;
- k. The examinees should not address to the Board of Examiners, but to the Assistant;
- l. The examinees may not withdraw from the grading test ceremony, without permission of the Assistant;
- m. Examinees will raise their right hand, addressing to the Assistant in order to ask to speak or to ask any question;
- n. It is important to provide breaks of five (5) minutes each hour, during which the examinees will not be allowed to leave in an indiscriminate way the site, (just go to the bathroom or drink water). This arrangement is intended to develop the "self-Control";
- o. At the end of the promotion examination test, conduct the protocol of bowing, (those specified for Class Ending Protocol: Section 2, P10). The Assistant waits for examiners to go out of the place before breaking the examinees formation, thus concluding the act of examination.

## SECTION 4 – PROTOCOL IN TOURNAMENTS

### P13. GENERAL RULES

It is very important to standardize the ITF Protocol for Tournaments, so that the same requirements are applied worldwide. This does not preclude each national and/or allied organization might create local rules, which enrich the protocol and identify their countries through customs or protocol traditional uses. The intent of these rules is not to detract from the traditional events that identify each country.

### P14. PROCEDURE

- a. All ITF tournaments must be properly organized, so that they can begin and end on time. This is important as punctuality is a sign of respect for others, but also because the Tournament Official Party may not commence without the presence of the highest authorities (including special guests), which will prevent them wait unnecessarily;



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- b. The Organizer must provide a VIP lounge at the site of the tournament, for the "primary" reception of the ITF authorities and special guests;
- c. This VIP lounge should be equipped with a catering service (water, soft drinks and snacks);
- d. The organizer will appoint a "Chief of Ceremony and Protocol", who will have the necessary amount of helpers -properly identified-, and who will be responsible for guiding the ITF authorities and their special guests throughout their stay at the tournament site;
- e. Provision of a VIP place at the stadium, where those accredited as such may be accessed at any time they wish, without limitation of time.

### **P15. OPENING CEREMONY**

- a. The day and time of the Opening Ceremony will be determined by the Tournament Organizing Committee and informed well in advance to the ITF authorities and their special guests;
- b. The Opening Ceremony will last -as maximum- two (2) hours between the beginning, presentation and entry of delegations and umpires, swearing-in procedures, speeches, demonstrations, etc.
- c. The "Chief of Ceremony and Protocol" will be responsible for coordinating and guiding the entrance of the ITF authorities and their special guests to the venue, taking care that competences to stop at all the rings during that time, inviting all competitors, instructors, coaches, umpires and the general public to stand up as a demonstration of courtesy to the ITF authorities and their special guests;
- d. The Organizer, as the host, will be responsible for directing the protocol greeting to authorities, special guests, as well as to all present;
- e. The ITF authorities and their special guests' location will be provided so that during the speeches of the Organizer or authorities they avoid standing with their back to the ITF authorities and their special guests in general;
- f. The "Chief of Ceremony and Protocol" will be responsible for providing the required seating locations for the ITF authorities and their special guests, which will be located along the ITF Protocol (according to rank). They should put the names of each person in their proper place, in order to facilitate its location. This will avoid incurring lack of respect and courtesy to the special guests and authorities.

### **P16. INAUGURAL SPEECH**



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- a. The Tournament Organizer shall appoint a Presenter (who may be the Chief of Ceremony and Protocol, or preferably a professional speaker or entertainer) who during the presentation should announce the correct names of the ITF authorities and their special guests, their positions and the countries they represent;
- b. The Presenter, once having made the presentation at the Opening Ceremony and after having listened to the national anthem of the organizing country, shall invite the Tournament Organizer to give the welcome speech;
- c. After the welcome speech, the Organizer will invite -if present- some important authorities to give their speech. The ITF President will be the last to make a speech and declare the Championship open;
- d. Once finished the Opening Ceremony and before the ITF authorities and their special guests leave the place, the Chief of Ceremony and Protocol will take care to invite all competitors, instructors, coaches, umpires and the general public to stand up, following protocol for bowing, directed by the Tournament Organizer.

### **P17. CLOSING CEREMONY**

- a. The Closing Ceremony of the tournament should be repeated with the same procedure of the Opening Ceremony, reducing the time to one (1) hour;
- b. Previous the end of the Closing ceremony the ITF flag will be delivered to the organizer of the next Tournament;
- c. This delivery will be done by the ITF President together with the tournament organizer to the next host, finishing with this act the present tournament.

### **P18. ETIQUETTE DURING TOURNAMENT CEREMONYS**

- a. During the opening and closing ceremonies the ITF authorities will follow appropriate clothing etiquette;
- b. Such clothing is described in the By Law of ITF and is summarized below;
- c. Assistants Instructors, between 1<sup>st</sup>. and 3<sup>rd</sup>. degree use a blue tie; (Bo-Sabum);
- d. Instructors and International Instructors between 4<sup>th</sup>. and 6<sup>th</sup>. Degree use a red tie (Sabum);
- e. Masters, from 7<sup>th</sup>. to 8<sup>th</sup>. Degree use a gold tie; (Sahyum);
- f. Grand Masters, 9<sup>th</sup>. Degree use a white tie; (Sasung);



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- g. Appropriate etiquette is required for official events, therefore wearing of casual clothing such as jeans, shorts, or open sandals is not considered appropriate.

## **SECTION 5 – SOCIAL PROTOCOL**

### **P19. GENERAL RULES**

As a general rule it should be noted that the ITF Protocol must be met in all areas where the students interact with other members of the ITF, whether people are in the Dojang, promotion tests ceremonies, tournaments, social events and/or in public.

Outside the classroom (Dojang) the Juniors students must properly greet the Grand Masters, Masters, Instructors and Seniors. When they are in a group the Juniors must bow first to the Senior.

At social events such as dinners, banquets or any type of social gathering it is allowed that participants, Masters, instructors, practitioners can attend without dress with colorful ties that identify at graduation. In short, the use of tie is free.

### **P20. BOWING TO SENIORS**

- a. Juniors should not offer their hand to the Seniors. They should expect that Seniors come first;
- b. Greet with AN outstretched right hand, placing the left hand under/near the right elbow, palm facing up. Perform a respectful bow;
- c. For a more personal greeting some Seniors might use both hands, taking the other's hand with the right hand and placing left hand above;
- d. For very respectful and formal greetings: place the left hand under the right elbow directly. The farther away the left hand is placed in relation to the right, the more respect is shown to Seniors;
- e. Seniors must be addressed as: Sir/Madam, Instructor/Master, Professor, Grand Master, Bo Sabum, Sabum, Sahyun, Sasung. Always use the title and last name, never the first name;
- f. Always perform a bow to approach a Senior, prior to any contact;
- g. Always use correct language, never vulgarity or profanity;



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- h. Never intentionally show your back to a Senior. Upon leaving, take three steps back and then turn to leave;
- i. Always say: "Thank you very much Sir/ Madam; Instructor, Professor, Master/Grand Master, Bo Sabum, Sabum, Sahyum, Sasung", and: "Yes/No, Sir/Madam; Instructor, Professor, Master/Grand Master, Bo Sabum, Sabum, Sahyum, Sasung", with a clear and audible voice;
- j. Juniors may disagree with the Seniors, as long as they express their feelings in a respectful and polite way;
- k. It is considered rude to interrupt a Senior; therefore, Juniors should first raise their hand indicating the intention of speaking;
- l. Open doors for Seniors, including car doors;
- m. If he Senior is carrying something, the Junior should be friendly and politely offer to carry it;
- n. Avoid asking opinions on: politics, religious, institutional matters, etc., to the Seniors, especially when they are in public;
- o. When giving or receiving an object, always use both hands. It is considered a gesture of respect and consideration.

### P21. TABLE MANNERS

- a. Always wait for Seniors to take their location on the table and sit first;
- b. Seniors will be placed at the head or in the middle of the table, with their wife/husband and/or companion at their side. Others will sit down together with their wives/husbands and/or companions on both sides, from the rank of Senior to Junior, alternating from right to left;
- c. The host of the event should sit next to the Senior, regardless of rank;
- d. The host will arrange for the menu to be presented first to the Seniors, so that they can order their food/drink first, followed by others in descending order of rank. Wait patiently for the Seniors to open the menu and order their food first;
- e. Once the food and drink is on the table, wait until the Seniors take and try their food first;
- f. In a toast, make sure the top edge of the Junior's glass is below the Senior's glass. Use both hands (as in greeting);
- g. Seniors should never pour their own drink as this will be done by someone of lower rank. Be sure to fill the Senior cup before that of the Junior;



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- h. Juniors should pay attention to so the Senior cup is always fairly full;
- i. If a Senior is in need of something, it is the responsibility of the Junior to arrange it;
- j. Always ask permission to approach or leave the table;
- k. Always when Seniors are approaching or getting up from the table, Juniors must stand up and sit down only after the Seniors have done so;
- l. Observe good manners, never slouching or resting the elbows on the table.

### **P22. WHEN IN A VEHICLE**

- a. The driver will open the car door for the Seniors;
- b. Seniors will always enter the vehicle first, followed by the others, in order of rank;
- c. Seniors will sit in the back seat (behind the front passenger seat). The host or the interpreter will sit in the front passenger seat, the others will be located next to the Senior category in descending order of rank (the rank of the driver will not be taken into consideration in this case);
- d. The driver of the vehicle disembarks first and opens the door of the Seniors. The other passengers leave the vehicle in order of rank.

### **P23. WHEN SPEAKING ON THE TELEPHONE**

- a. While speaking on the phone (or any of its existing variants: Skype, video conferencing, etc.) Juniors should follow the protocol, showing the same respect as when talking face to face with the Seniors;
- b. Juniors will use the proper forms of address when speaking to the Seniors, and say: "Yes, sir", "No, Ma'am", etc.;
- c. It is important that Juniors listen carefully and do not interrupt the Seniors, therefore always requesting permission to ask a question.

### **P24. EXCHANGING CORRESPONDENCE**

- a. Protocol should be respected also in written correspondence using appropriate forms to direct to Seniors;
- b. The tone of the correspondence should always be respectful;
- c. Due to e-mail (and other electronic media currently in use) through correspondence is almost instantaneous, and therefore there is a marked



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tendency to relax the standards of both grammar and etiquette. However, whether the correspondence is done through conventional media, e-mails or other, it is important to follow the protocol;

- d. Each person will be treated courteously and with the respect according to rank and/or position.

**"IT IS OUR WISH THAT ALL THESE RULES MAY SERVE TO  
IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN ALL TAEKWON-DO STUDENTS,  
FOR THE WELLNESS AND THE FUTURE OF ALL THAT INTEGRATE  
THE GREAT ITF FAMILY"**

### MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

It is very important for myself to have had the opportunity of formalizing the "Official Protocol of ITF Taekwon-Do"; as asked by the President of the ITF, GM Pablo Trajtenberg and the members of the Executive Committee.

I thank my colleagues for having the confidence in me to develop such an important contribution to the "Do" of our martial art, and I hope sincerely that this is a guide to human behavior in the society in which we are living.

Nobility forces me to recognize the teaching of many Masters who have enriched my knowledge and wisdom in the course of my Taekwon-Do training, emphasizing the martial art.

I cannot ignore the lessons learned due to my closeness, affection for and the place that has given me our "Father of Taekwon-Do", General Choi Hong Hi.

It is also important to remember that part of what has been done in this document was developed by the writings by GM Tran Trieu Quan, who with great tact left us documented very important and relevant concepts of the Protocol and the teaching of the "Do". Therefore, I wish to acknowledge the valuable work of Grand Master Tran Trieu Quan.



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### Collaborators:

- Grand Master Pablo Trajtenberg
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ITF Taekwon-Do Official Protocol.

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