



Paris, 11th January 2008

Re: Letter to competitors

Dear all,

First of all, we would like to thank you for your support and solidarity in the challenge that has faced us all. Cancellation of the Dakar Rally 2008 was forced upon us and in this letter, we would like to tell you completely openly what the reasons were that led to this decision.

We know how much of your hearts you have put into this 30th rally, and we understand your commitment to embracing this new challenge. Our decision was dictated by the very real risk of terrorism which exceeds any threat we have faced in the past.

We are keen to share with you all the concrete stages that led us to cancel the Dakar Rally 2008. We think it's important that you are in a position to understand what was at stake and the decisions that we had to deal with.

- On 24 December 2007, serious incidents cost four French tourists their life in Mauritania.
- From 27 December, the organisational team was in Mauritania in order to assess, together with the Mauritanian authorities and the French authorities on location, what measures to implement to guarantee the rally's safe passage through this country. It was only when we arrived on location that we became aware of the attack against 3 Mauritanian militia. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs then expressed reservations about French nationals travelling in the area. At this stage, it was not our feeling that the rally should be cancelled, the Mauritanian authorities having shown us their security plan which involved 4 000 men and aerial surveillance.
- On 2 January, during a meeting at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, we were advised that the security situation was deteriorating, and that a new type of threat could now be specified.
- On 3 January, despite major security measures, the French Government, on the advice of ministers, publicly and firmly advised French nationals not to travel to Mauritania, mentioning the rally in particular. We then attempted a final intervention to be sure that this warning was well-founded and we learnt that there was a terrorist threat surrounding the Dakar rally itself, and not just Mauritania.
- The decision to cancel was thus forced upon us on the evening of 3 January, and we made the official announcement on 4 January at midday.

Safety concerns, which are our prime responsibility towards you, forced us to make this decision at the last minute since there was no other reasonable alternative put forward; but please be aware that right up to the last minute, we tried everything to ensure that this thirtieth rally could take place.



A.S.O.
Amaury Sport Organisation

We did not take this decision lightly. There will be major financial losses for all of us. A.S.O. sticks by its decision and will shoulder its responsibilities as organiser by respecting its commitments; we will therefore reimburse each participant's registration costs as quickly as possible. We will stand by the African countries that were awaiting your arrival. It is inconceivable that we should abandon Africa and we will continue our cooperation in 2008 via our sustainable development programme within Actions Dakar as well as the other activities we undertake on this continent.

Today, we would like to reassure you that the spirit of Dakar is alive and well, and that the Dakar Rally 2009 will take place.

As soon as we returned to Paris, the entire organisational team immediately set to work, determined to bring you an attractive programme of sports over this year, starting in the coming weeks, and in particular with a new meeting in the spring of 2008, and culminating in a very large Dakar in January 2009.

Since its inception, the Dakar has had to face numerous challenges, but it has always been able to recover and keep running. The Dakar, this mythical race, imbued with a special spirit, an international embodiment of rally adventure and symbol of reaching beyond oneself and engaging with local populations, will be back very soon.

Kind regards,

Etienne Lavigne
Director of the Dakar