

French tech group Atos picks Onepoint's rescue bid

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Atos runs supercomputers for France's nuclear deterrent and will provide real-time results during the Paris Olympics.

Struggling French tech group Atos, an Olympics partner and key French defense contractor, said Tuesday it had chosen a financial rescue offer

by a consortium led by its top shareholder Onepoint.

Atos—which runs supercomputers for France's nuclear deterrent, holds contracts with the French army and is the IT partner for the Paris Olympics—is sagging under almost five billion euros (\$5.4 billion) of debt.

The group said its board chose the financial restructuring proposal made by digital consultancy Onepoint of French businessman David Layani and its partners Butler Industries and Econocom over a bid led by Czech billionaire Daniel Kretinsky.

Layani said in a statement he was "fully mobilized" to ensure that Atos would once again take its place as a major player on the international scene.

Atos chairman Jean-Pierre Mustier said in a statement Tuesday's events were an "important milestone in our financial restructuring process".

"A solution has emerged, which aligns with the interest of the company's stakeholders, particularly our employees and clients," he said.

The company said Onepoint's offer had "the support of a large number of Atos' financial creditors and thus gives greater confidence in reaching a definitive financial restructuring agreement."

The company said it would work with the Onepoint consortium to reach a definitive financial restructuring agreement that would be implemented by July.

The Paris Olympics begin on July 26. Atos has insisted that its financial woes will not disrupt its operations during the Games, for which it will provide real-time results and manage more than 300,000 accreditations.

Key government contractor

Atos is also a key government contractor and the French state has said it would acquire strategically important company activities, including advanced computing, "mission-critical systems" and cybersecurity products.

Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has said the move would prevent such strategic activities from "falling under the ownership of foreign actors".

The finance ministry told AFP on Tuesday it would submit a "more precise" offer in the coming days and expected to finalize a deal in July.

The government has also provided a 50-million-euro loan to the company.

Onepoint's financial restructuring deal includes pumping 250 million euros in new equity into Atos, providing 1.5 billion euros in new debt and converting 2.9 billion euros of debt into shares.

"The proposal submitted by the Onepoint consortium is generally consistent with the key financial parameters outlined by the Company in April," Atos chief executive Paul Saleh said.

"It will adequately fund the business and allow Atos to extend its leadership position in the market and continue to deliver outstanding services and solutions to its clients," he added.

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