



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

Adoption of the Sport as an Enabler of Sustainable Development resolution

United Nations, 12 November 2024

Dear President,

Please allow me first of all to express our deepest sympathy to China and the victims of the tragic incident at Zhuhai sports centre.

Your Excellencies,

Please accept my heartfelt thanks on the adoption of this resolution, hopefully by consensus, demonstrating once again that sport can bring us all together. I am especially grateful to the Group of Friends of Sport, co-chaired by Monaco and Qatar, and all Member States for recognising once more the autonomy and political neutrality of the IOC. Rest assured, we will use this autonomy also in the future responsibly to promote the values we share with the UN: Universality. Equality. Non-discrimination. Rule of Law. Solidarity. And above all: Peace.

As Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, whom I thank very much for his very supportive report, has said: “The Olympic spirit is the most important symbol of peace in today’s world”.

We could make this symbol a reality at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 only by fully exercising this autonomy and political neutrality. In Paris, athletes from the territories of all 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team, competed fiercely against each other. At the same time, they lived peacefully together under one roof in the Olympic Village. Despite many of their countries being at war, the athletes respected one another. The athletes showed us how our world would be, if we all were to live in the Olympic spirit of peaceful co-existence. They created a culture of peace.

Paris represents the culmination of a decade of the ever-deepening partnership between the UN and the IOC. In 2014, the UN and the IOC signed an MoU, marking the start of a new era of unprecedented cooperation. In 2015, sport was recognised as an “important enabler” for the UN Sustainable Development Goals and in 2020, sport was declared a “global accelerator for peace and development”.

We consider peace as the most important SDG. Our mission is to create a culture of peace, by bringing together athletes from the entire world, even if their countries are at war.

At the Olympic Games, we are all equal, regardless of background or nationality. There is no “global south” or “global north”. There is only one global village: the Olympic Village. Everybody who respects the rules of the Olympic Charter is welcome at the Olympic Games.

In this context, please allow me to correct a false narrative accusing the IOC of discrimination and politicisation by sanctioning the Russian Olympic Committee. The fact is, we had to suspend them because the Russian Olympic Committee annexed sport organisations on the territory of the National Olympic Committee of Ukraine. This violation of the territorial integrity is a blatant breach of our Olympic Charter – as it would be of the Charter of the United Nations. Despite this suspension, the IOC granted the Russian athletes the privilege to participate in Paris in a neutral status, meaning with no reference to their suspended National Olympic Committee and its symbols.

In this way – and only in this way – we could bring together the athletes from the territories of all 206 National Olympic Committees and could create this culture of peace. The athletes, many from countries at war, took this even further, when they together made a powerful call for peace from the Olympic Village.

We are immensely grateful to our French partners and friends for cooperating with us so closely to prepare the stage for this strong message of solidarity and peace.

Another milestone in creating this culture of peace were the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018, when the athletes from South and North Korea marched together at the Opening Ceremony behind the Korean Unification flag.

We know that sport cannot create peace. Peace can only be created by you, the political leaders. This is why I appeal to you to heed this call of the athletes: Give peace a chance.

To contribute to ten SDGs other than peace, like health, social inclusion, gender equality or sustainability, we signed MoUs and are cooperating with all relevant UN agencies, with governments, with development institutions and with other NGOs like us.

I wholeheartedly encourage you to replicate this successful international model of cooperation at your national level. Engage with your National Olympic Committee and make sport an integral part of your development plans. In doing so, we can create a win-win situation to achieve our common goals.

In realising our shared vision for a better world, we are already benefiting from artificial intelligence. With our Olympic AI Agenda, we want to harness the benefits of AI for sport in a responsible way. In sport we are not confronted with the ultimate ethical question of whether AI will replace the human being. The 100 metres will always have to be run by an athlete – a human being. Therefore, also when it comes to AI, we are taking an athlete-centred, a human-centred approach. And we will live up to our commitment to equality through solidarity by making the benefits of AI available to everyone in the Olympic Movement around the globe.

We cannot realise this humanistic vision of AI without a global regulation. This is why I appeal to you, to the UN member states to take the lead in creating such a global AI regulation, preserving human dignity and ensuring equitable progress.

Since my presidency is nearing its end, please accept my heartfelt thanks for a decade of partnership and friendship that I have experienced at the United Nations. It has been an honour to share this journey with you, united by our belief in the shared values of the UN and the IOC. I humbly ask you to offer my successor the same spirit of partnership in order to make the world a better place through sport – together.