

International Forum on Sport, Peace and Development

Session 1 – The potential of sport in the search for peace and development

Speech from the IOC President, Jacques Rogge

Olympic Museum, Lausanne, 7 May 2009

Mr Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser of the UN Secretary
General on Sport for Development and Peace,
Distinguished representatives of Governments,
international and other organisations,
Dear friends of the Olympic Family,

- I am very pleased to welcome you to the International Forum on Sport, Peace and Development.
- I would like first to thank the IOC International Relations Commission for taking such an initiative, reminding us of the beneficial impact that sport can have on society.
- My thanks go also to those who have made this Forum possible, the relevant IOC departments and

many people out there who have put in a great deal of effort to ensure that this forum happens.

- I should like also to express my special thanks to Mr Lemke for his presence today, along with his colleagues from the UN System.
- We value very much our relationship with the United Nations. Indeed, the successful delivery of the Olympic values depends largely on cooperation with the UN System.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- We are gathered here today because we all share the same concern: in our ever-changing society, the socio-economic schism threatens to divide mankind ever more.
- How can we all cooperate to improve the lot of humanity?
- The Olympic Movement is about people. It is people-centred, people-oriented and, one might dare say, a people's movement.

- But more importantly, it is for young people, the so-called “Now Generation” without whom the very future of the world is in peril.
- In its role as leader of the Olympic Movement and guardian of the Olympic ideals and values, the International Olympic Committee has worked tirelessly for over a century to place sport at the centre of the harmonious development of mankind. Ever since the Ancient Greece, the Olympics were about an ideal, for peace and human development.
- This is a fundamental principle enshrined in our Olympic Charter, as is the fact that every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination and in an Olympic spirit of mutual understanding, friendship and fair play.
- The founder and the reviver of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, was already in his time a very strong advocate of international cooperation and of the social and human values of sport.
- In 1894 he set in motion a revived Olympics that was to evolve with time. He enshrined in the statutes of the IOC the importance of cooperation

and collaboration in delivering an Olympic ideal that was based on education and health for all, these are the fundamental rights to be delivered on the back of sport.

- Thus the idea of combining sport and human development is not a new one.
- Of course, the IOC remains above all a sports organisation.
- Sport is our core business and our main goal is to organise the Olympic Games and to develop sport and its practice worldwide from grass-roots level to elite performances.
- This is possible through our large network of 205 National Olympic Committees across the five continents
- Billions of people around the world practise sport as a healthy pastime or for the sheer fun of it, some for professional reasons. There are millions of volunteers who give of their time for no remuneration as well as coaches, administrators and technicians who support the athletes and thus make sport a reality in our everyday lives.

- For example, in the European Union alone, there are more than 550,000 sports clubs with 180 million sports people.
- They all play by the same rules, abide by the same rules and speak the same sport language.
- Because indeed, sport is a universal language.
- It strengthens body and mind. And it can teach social skills.
- It teaches young people to respect the rules, not only of sport but of society. It imbues in them a sense of responsibility and team work.
- Respect for authorities, as respect for referees on the field is a lesson they carry in life. They learn to respect self and others.
- Sport contributes to shape their identity and personality and bring them health.
- Sport is thus an enormous socio-economic and educational movement whose potential is yet to be exploited to the full.
- The decision in 2005 by the world political leaders to formally recognise the value of sport to human development and its contribution to the achievement

of the UN Millennium Development Goals was the turning point in the very evolution of the IOC's approach to development through sport, as this set a clear political framework.

- Since then, the IOC, and many international federations, have increased resource allocation to education, human development through sport, humanitarian actions and support for youth and societies in conflict or post-conflict situations.
- There is no doubt that the Olympic Games leave an increasingly positive legacy in terms of sustainable social and economic development for the host city and the country at large.
- But beyond this, the IOC is using the Olympic Games to bring to the fore human development issues around the world.
- The very successful "Giving is Winning" project in Athens and Beijing did more than collect many containers full of sport equipment for distribution by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to refugees camps in Europe, Asia and Africa.

- This project taught the thousands of sportspersons around the world to appreciate that fellow humans believe in, the value of peaceful co-existence and the spirit of giving.
- The Olympic Games also provide support of various kinds of other initiatives.
- The HIV/AIDS advocacy programme has enabled UNAIDS to deliver their message directly to young people; the funding and fund-raising projects in Athens and Torino and the future ones in Vancouver and London have and will contribute enormously to UNICEFs world-wide programmes.
- Since 1922, just two years after the establishment of the League of Nations, the IOC and the International Labor Organisation signed a memorandum of understanding, promising to collaborate and thus set the stage for today's values-based cooperation between the IOC, the UN System and humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross Movement.
- This is a clear win-win situation. For who can dispute the major contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme to the internationally-

acclaimed environmental programmes of the Olympic Games. The success of the Beijing undertaking takes a very special place in our hearts.

- I think also of the contribution of the Red Cross in training the tens of thousands of volunteers for the Beijing Games, and taking that opportunity to educate the masses on the need to donate blood and training them in disaster preparedness and management.
- Over the past one year, the IOC has been reviewing its relationship with these organisations with a view to strengthening our contribution, better directing our efforts and adding value to what those organisations are doing.
- We are helping to promote education and culture, human development, sustainability, a culture of peace and gender equality; the integration of disadvantaged communities, populations at risk and indigenous people's.
- To advance the cause of women in and through sport is one of our major priorities.

- There is no doubt that providing women with equal opportunities to participate in sports competition, administration and coaching is a fundamental human right.
- However, as I have often said, sport is not the panacea for all of society's ills. The IOC and all sporting community cannot on their own address the socio-economic problems that continually threaten world peace.
- Sport can contribute, and effectively. A meeting of minds is obvious, between the sport and political leadership.
- The European Union has acknowledged the specificity of sport in its proposed constitution and our meetings with European sports ministers have emphasized the potential of sport in employment, development and the health of the people.
- We are glad that the African Union has since last year adopted new policies that change completely the appreciation of sport in the continent by placing it at the centre of development, peace, gender

- equality, education and mobilizing young people for the good of the continent.
- Thus the IOC's "Olympic Sport for Hope" project building infrastructure in developing countries would not be successful without the participating of local governments, the NOCs and international federations.
 - The projects under this programme aim at providing young people and communities in developing countries with opportunities to practise sport and be provided basic services.
 - Finally, we also strive for the promotion of peace through the International Olympic Truce Foundation's work and the Olympic Truce ideal.
 - Again, we are aware that sport cannot enforce or maintain peace. But it has a vital role to play in building a better and more peaceful world as it appeals to the community in general and to those young people who are prone to pick up a gun and fight in and for a cause that usually they don't understand.

- Sport can facilitate dialogue between different communities and be a catalyst for mutual understanding in our society.
- To that end, several initiatives have been undertaken with UN peace-keeping missions, the sport community and governments in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Haiti.
- I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the initiatives by the “Generations for Peace” which was founded by HRH Prince Faisal al Hussein, President of the NOC of Jordan, as well as the Monaco-based “Peace and Sport” which was founded by Joel Bouzou and whose patron is HSH Prince Albert II.
- The Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation in Kenya has taken people-based initiatives that have brought tangible results to the traditionally hostile people in Kenya, Uganda and Sudan.
- There are of course many other initiatives out there too numerous to mention.
- We will have the opportunity to learn and discover more about these initiatives over the next two days.

Just as important for us will be how we all can move this agenda forward by supporting each other in order to make the positive difference that we all strive for.

- We feel that in order for sport to survive and thrive it has to contribute to seeking answers to society's real concerns while at the same time being true to its own values of drug-free competition that is driven by a passion for sport itself, fair play and respect.
- Just some of the IFs will give us a glimpse into their contributions and, of course, organisations at both ends of the development spectrum, the donors and the recipients, will give us their perspective of sport's involvement.
- The past Organising Committees of the Olympic Games set a high standard for contributing to human development.
- Both Vancouver and London are raising the bar even higher: Vancouver with its involvement of the indigenous peoples in the organisation of the games, action that has brought peace and harmony where none was known between the four host First

Nations; and London with its International Inspiration project that is already benefiting tens of thousands of children around the world through UNICEF.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- One cannot expect the sports movement to succeed where social and political movements have failed. However, where sport can contribute, it shall strive to do so.
- This is why we value these partnerships, with the World Health Organisation, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, ILO, UNHCR, the Red Cross Movement and many others, governments and civil society. They are extremely important for us.
- We can never replace these institutions or governments in addressing mankind's socio-economic problems. You are the competent authorities.

Distinguished delegates,

Dear friends,

- I look forward to the next two days discussing sport, development and peace issues and to using this opportunity to encourage society at large to put sport at its heart.
- For in doing so, not only does each of us become a healthier individual, but the socio-economic beneficial impact of sport can become even more effective and real.
- Thank you