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ORIGINAL TEXT IN FRENCH

The Olympic Charter stipulates that the Olympic Movement encompasses all members of the International Federations (IFs) and National Olympic Committees (NOCs), in particular the athletes, whose interests constitute a fundamental element of its action. This means that the athletes constitute the nodal point of the Olympic Movement, to which they belong through their National Federations (NFs) and NOCs.

The founding act is thus membership of an NF through a club, or individually in certain cases.

But it is useful to stress that an athlete is primarily the product of his or her family and school, before being a member of a club or NF. His or her participation in international competitions, particularly the Olympic Games, is the result of long years of work under the supervision of an essential person, namely the coach, plus the whole team of men and women who help him to reach maturity.

An athlete today can choose to follow a professional career in sport without being deprived of taking part in the Olympic Games, held every four years.

So how do we ensure that the athlete's interests remain a key concern of the Olympic Movement, despite the fact that he or she is torn between a club, an NF, an IF and sometimes a government?

How do we ensure that the demands of sports performance do not penalise the athlete, whom society is proud to count among its members and enjoys holding up as an example to young people?

How do we ensure that the media uses athletes' achievements, and the economic and financial benefits derived from them, to help ensure their proper personal development and strengthen their desire to serve their community during and after their sports career?

It seems to me that the first answer to all these questions is to be found in a good education in the Olympic values, at school and in the club. We must understand that "humanity is involved in a race between education and disaster", and that sport has become a key element in this education. So let us produce together the educational tools needed

for the task and make them broadly available to schools and clubs through our NFs and NOCs.

But where there is sport, there is competition, and the athlete's desire to push his or her own limits in order to be the best and the champion. In this adventure, which is hazardous to the athlete's health and social future, everyone around must strive to play their role, and play it as fairly as possible.

- Firstly, at national level, the club, NF, NOC and government must create a space to encourage the athlete's development and self-expression. By joining, he or she has decided to participate. Now, participating is taking part and playing a part. For this reason, going beyond the Athletes' Commission within his or her Federation and NOC, the athlete needs to have access to all levels of decision-making. It is often at national level that we see tensions and antagonism, which could be avoided by accepting, once and for all, the need for the autonomy of the Olympic and sports movement, together with the requirement of good governance. It is at national level that we see the problem of increasing numbers of talented athletes leaving, and it is here that we have to define, with the public authorities, ways of halting what is akin to the trafficking of children into exile when they are less than 15 years old. With this in mind, the state and national sporting authorities need to combine their efforts in order to define a proper elite-sport policy.
- Internationally, where media influence and its economic and financial consequences often push athletes to do more and more, athletes are already well represented within certain IFs and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This representation needs to be extended to all IFs and NOCs. Their participation in international competitions, especially the Olympic Games, is invariably through the intermediary of their NF or NOC, but is subject to various requirements defined by the Olympic Movement. This includes:
 - submission to out-of-competition and in-competition doping controls;
 - achieving a minimum performance standard;
 - compliance with nationality rules;
 - compliance with advertising rules and so on.

All these requirements will be developed during the course of our discussions. I shall not add to them, except to stress once again the need for us to agree on the best way to harmonise our efforts to ensure that the athlete, who still demands to be known as such eight years after he or she last competes in the Olympic Games, may continue to serve sport and Olympism within all the national, continental and global governing bodies.