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ORIGINAL TEXT IN FRENCH

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the mission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) clearly goes beyond organising the Olympic Games, the Games nonetheless represent the most visible element of the work of our organisation, and the one through which our action is known and judged. They are also the best instrument available to the IOC for spreading its message and philosophy.

The Olympic Games are enjoying great success on all levels: they are still the top event for all athletes; the best means of presenting and promoting their sport for the International Federations (IFs); a competition that all television channels want to broadcast; an important source of funding for the Olympic Movement; and an event that the world's major cities would love to host. Yet this success must not prevent us from taking a critical look at our Games, in order to perfect them and, above all, to make sure that they are developing in a way which will ensure that their success continues.

An Olympic Congress is the ideal opportunity for such an analysis, by seeking first to identify the reasons for this success, and then focusing on the weak points, which could compromise this favourable situation. This analysis should lead us to an understanding of the measures and remedies that are needed. I shall set about this by describing some of the essential aspects, which will then be studied in more detail within the framework of each of the three separate sessions, which will address, respectively: "How to keep the Games as a premier event?"; "The Olympic values"; and "Universality and developing countries".

2. HOW TO KEEP THE GAMES AS A PREMIER EVENT?

a) Choosing the Host City

In my mind, ensuring that the Games remain a premier event requires us to devote even closer attention to choosing the Host Cities. The success of the Games depends to a large extent on this choice. To this end, I would propose three measures: pre-conditions, a candidature acceptance procedure and a revised evaluation.

Pre-conditions. Today, all a city has to do is announce to the IOC that it is an Applicant City in order to become one. I would propose that, in future, the IOC draws up and makes known the minimum standards that a city has to meet in order to be allowed to submit a candidature (population, number of hotel rooms, existence of at least some of the facilities, etc.). These pre-conditions would inform potential candidates and act as an efficient filter to prevent cities, which manifestly do not meet the necessary standards from considering a bid. When establishing these requirements, we would of course have to take into account the ability of the Games to accelerate development for a Host City and ensure that the principle of universality in awarding the Games is not compromised.

A candidature acceptance procedure. In line with the pre-conditions, I would foresee an initial candidature acceptance procedure. Cities wishing to become candidates would have to submit, at the start, not only a statement of intent to bid but also a file containing the basic details of their ability to host an event the size of the Games. Applicant Cities do this already, but much later in the process, in order to become Candidate Cities. These files would be evaluated immediately, and the bid accepted or refused. If it were accepted, a city would immediately become a Candidate City, and the hybrid and uncomfortable status of Applicant City, which leaves huge question marks hanging for a whole year, would no longer exist. In my view, by doing this we would avoid frivolous bids by cities seeking only to use the Games for temporary publicity. The procedure would be more transparent and we would certainly improve the quality of the choice offered to us by being able to concentrate from the outset on solid bids. We would also gain a year, and all the parties concerned would make major cost savings.

A revised evaluation. In addition to current criteria, the analysis criteria should be expanded to take into account the quality of the framework offered, the welcome to be expected, the ability to give the event a festive atmosphere, for example. Furthermore, the Evaluation Commission's report should be more explicit and more clear-cut. I am well aware of the arguments for its current form.

Even so, by telling us that all the Candidate Cities are capable of organising very good Games, the report is lacking in pertinence and, in particular, it offers a clear conscience to those who vote out of sympathy, to the detriment of the technical quality of the files and the athletes' interests. We should more clearly indicate the differences between the candidates on the different themes, but without establishing a general ranking, so that each person may apply the weighting that he or she wishes to use for the various aspects of the bid in order to make a final choice.

While I am fully aware of the contribution that being a Candidate City can represent (promotion of the Olympic message, major mobilisation of the various stakeholders around visionary and motivational projects, development of major urban projects, which sometimes go ahead even without the Games), I feel it would be advisable to shorten, as much as possible, the period between the submission of candidatures and the Host City election. We would reduce the lobbying and seduction efforts we see today, without compromising the positive contributions of a bid. We would also significantly reduce the costs involved.

b) Programme

After looking at the framework for hosting the Games and the quality of the people who will be organising them, we now need to address



their content, the second element on which their success depends. The Games Programme naturally has to be attractive to the largest number of those involved, to all ages and on all continents. But their appeal must not be due solely to the quality of the entertainment offered, as the Games are far more than a mere “show”. The attraction must also take into account the athletic, technical and educational value of the sports presented. A good programme consists of a subtle and balanced mixture of disciplines which, by complementing one another, constitute the richness of the programme. The IOC has defined a core of sports vital to the Programme. This core needs to be reviewed from time to time, but this review should go further than the sports regarded as a whole, and also take account of other elements, such as the attractiveness of the different disciplines.

Indeed, we tend to look at sports in their entirety, even though it is obvious that not all disciplines of the same sport have equal universality and attractiveness. Therefore, I feel that we could increase the appeal of the Olympic Games, to ensure that they remain the premier sports event they are today, by inviting the IFs to examine in detail each of their disciplines or events on the basis of criteria defined by the IOC and, if necessary, clean up their programme. This programme could also be improved by ensuring shorter sessions with better rhythm and balance, and by avoiding having several key events in different sports taking place at the same time. The presentation of the sports, their staging and their educational dimension could also certainly be improved.

To ensure their continuing success, the Games must also avoid opening themselves up to criticism, on any point whatsoever, even if we can never please everyone. To the general public, for example, the Olympic Games sometimes seem over-commercialised. To counterbalance this impression, we have the duty to highlight, during the Games, the advantages of this commercialisation as ensuring the universality and democracy of sport, and to recall the continued existence of the values of Olympism, especially the cultural and educational aspects.

c) Organisation

In this area, we also need to continue the efforts made to control costs and the impact on the environment, as well as to ensure the quality of the legacy the Games leave in a city, i.e. both the hard and soft legacy. The IOC has already made huge efforts in this area, including a larger number of recommendations and elements relating to sustainable development and Games legacy in the technical manuals. The Olympic Games Impact (OGI) programme is also an excellent tool, which makes everyone involved think about the long term, and the legacy of the Games in particular. We are likewise producing an increasing number of case studies in order to better understand how to capitalise on the lasting benefits of the Games. This element is so fundamental that no effort must be spared, and the Coordination Commission for each Games has a key role to play here. It can help to better control the various demands made on Organising Committees, be they from sponsors, television networks, National Olympic Committees (NOCs), IFs or other partners. It can also help the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs) and their partners to benefit more from the contributions of the Olympic Games Knowledge Management (OGKM) and the lessons learned from previous Games. It is true that relations between the IOC, via its Coordination Commission, and the OCOGs depend essentially on the goodwill of the two parties, as it would be hard to imagine a procedure against an OCOG that would force it to execute the Host City contract. Great inter-cultural sensitivity is therefore essential to establish

and maintain excellent working relations with OCOGs from different cultures and contexts. The collaboration between the two bodies can only be productive when a relationship of complete trust is created and the parties are in constant communication with each other.

d) Magical nature

Lastly, I should like to conclude this section devoted to introducing the first subtheme by stressing the magical nature of the Olympic Games, which makes this event both unique and exceptionally attractive. This magical nature is the result of a very special alchemy which transcends all sports and highlights their common essence. Indeed, the Games represent far more than a collection of different world championships. It is not easy to identify all the ingredients that produce this magical nature. But it is essential to preserve and develop it if we wish for the Olympic Games to remain a unique and exceptional premier event.

3. OLYMPIC VALUES

a) Definition of Olympism

If we look now at the second subtheme, i.e. promoting the Olympic values, I feel that our first effort should be devoted to finding a better definition of Olympism. As well as Coubertin, many authors have written on Olympism with sometimes diverging interpretations and definitions. Furthermore, the field is vast and not easily accessible. We should therefore try to establish a number of major axes, which will help everyone get their bearings, and make Olympism easier for the uninitiated to understand, as well as make it easier to promote, for those whose job it is to do so.

b) Promoting Olympism

As mentioned earlier, such promotion should take the form of a counterweight to the increased commercialisation of the Games, which is essential for their development and democratisation, but which is sometimes excessive and leads to criticism by the general public.

When defending the values of Olympism, the IOC needs to avoid becoming hostage to political considerations linked to the defence of certain rights or minorities, for example.

Among the modern values of Olympism, in addition to encouraging freely given effort, self-control, fraternity among those who share the same ideals and solidarity, we certainly find protection of the environment and sustainable action and investment.

These values must not be temporary, but must leave a legacy to the city and country which hosts the Games. Promoting them must be a joint undertaking by everyone who, in one way or another, is involved in the preparation and holding of the Olympic Games, be it the IOC itself, the IFs, NOCs, media or the Host City. The athletes must also be key ambassadors of Olympism.

4. UNIVERSALITY AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

a) Universality

We can now look at the third subtheme, namely universality and developing countries.



Universality has long been one of the characteristics and objectives of the Olympic Movement. It has always enabled the participation of athletes who are remarkable more for their approximate technique than their record-setting abilities. Universality is one of the great riches of the Olympic Movement, and is part of its success. It is also thanks to this universality that countries and continents have found the motivation to progress and join the ranks of the best, and it would be wrong to concentrate on the participation of athletes from certain countries simply because they are the strongest.

However, the Olympic Games are first and foremost a competition among the best athletes in the world, and the fact that universality and excellence are rivals makes it difficult to strike a satisfactory balance between them. Universality always comes at the detriment of the best athletes. The Olympic Games represent the supreme goal of every athlete, and someone who narrowly misses out on being selected or qualifying, while an athlete of a much lower level from another country or continent can take part because of the universality principle, will certainly feel a sense of injustice. These disadvantages are undoubtedly the price to pay to ensure the universality of the Games. So let us consider this price as an investment so that, tomorrow, excellence is shared out among the largest possible number, and is not the prerogative of a few, as excellence does constitute a symbol of the Games.

When we talk of universality, we naturally think of the emerging countries. In this connection, I cannot conclude without expressing my wish to see the problem of nationality changes better regulated, especially to avoid rich countries being able to take away, with impunity, the top athletes from the countries, which have trained them. On this subject, I put down some ideas in a paper produced for the preparatory phase of this Congress, and I hope that they will help improve the situation.

b) Developing countries

When we talk about developing countries, we naturally regret the fact that some continents have not had the chance to stage the Olympic Games so far. But this is an omission, which cannot be easily addressed only through sympathy towards the continents in question. Organising the Olympic Games is extremely complex and demanding, and probably represents the most complex organisation in the world. The Games bring together the world's best athletes, who often have just one chance in their career to take part. For this reason, we cannot take the risk of entrusting such complex organisation to a country, which does not have the means to deal with it or which would have to invest too many resources to do so. But it is also up to the IOC to do all it can to facilitate organising the Games, to simplify their organisation and make them less expensive, so that in the not too distant future the Games can be held in Africa or South America.

These universality efforts must, in general, be aimed at reducing the gaps between countries, particularly rich and poor ones, be it in terms of sports results, economic aspects or simply, but crucially, development of the individual and recognition of the person as a human being. Every country in the world has the right to this; it is one of the fundamental goals of Olympism and the Olympic Movement; and it is on this optimistic note that I shall conclude.