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### THE NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEES (NOCs) AND THE DEFENCE OF THEIR AUTONOMY

The Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games in particular have become the most important sporting, social and cultural event of humanity, involving all countries, mobilising their young people, and with tens of millions of spectators informed of and enjoying – through television and the media – the participation of their favourite athletes and teams at the Games.

The revolution that has occurred in the media and the new alternatives that they offer, together with growing interest from the sponsors, have progressively transformed the Olympic Games into an event that goes beyond the boundaries of sport, strictly speaking.

Professionalism and marketing have been two fundamental elements in this latter stage, without which it would have been impossible to reach the current levels of development and scope of the Games.

A positive transformation has been taking place, which has been of benefit to the members of the Olympic Movement, their partners, their sponsors and the participating countries.

The prestige and leadership of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), as well as the increased audience of the Games, have raised even further the governments' interest in their countries' participation and results at the Olympic Games. This position, which is both logical and necessary, and tends to favour the development of Olympic sport, will have to be supported by the recognition of, and the most absolute respect for, the functions, responsibilities and prerogatives assigned by the Olympic Charter to the NOCs.

We, the members of the Olympic Movement, are aware that it will be possible to progress towards further development of Olympic sport in each country, and obtain higher results in Regional, Continental and Olympic Games, only if there is serious and responsible collaboration as well as respectful and permanent harmony between the government's sports authority and the NOC.

Particular interests, political motivations or individual ambition are other causes of conflict arising in all continents, characterised by direct and indirect interference from governmental authorities in the activity of the corresponding NOC, which violates its autonomy and prevents it from exercising its functions as defined in the Olympic Charter.

As President of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), I have witnessed, over the past decades, various cases of conflicts in which there has been a violation of the NOC's autonomy, in an intentional and obvious way. After taking many steps, it proved possible to reverse the situation in a positive direction, without any type of concession, in strict compliance with the Olympic Charter. This experience teaches us that the Olympic and Sports Movement must adopt the necessary measures that will allow for preventive action, and will ensure, should a violation occur, its members' independence and autonomy.

This situation has become even more serious over the last few years. For this reason, the IOC has organised two International Seminars in order to analyse, in all their scope and complexity, the issues relating to the autonomy of the Olympic and Sports Movement.

Today, we come together at the XIII Olympic Congress with a far-ranging agreement on the actions that must be taken in the future concerning autonomy. The presence of over 130 Heads of State and Government at the Olympic Games in Beijing makes it an obligation for us to think about the increasing interest aroused by the Games, and, consequently, this new reality is an indication that in the future, relations between NOCs and governments concerning the promotion and development of Olympic sport will depend on different circumstances that will require clear and precise rules, as well as mutual respect and understanding between both parties.

For the conclusions of the Olympic Congress, it is important to analyse this issue fully, and, for this reason, I consider it important to highlight a few concepts that could serve as a basis for a global policy concerning the autonomy of the Olympic and Sports Movement:

- Recognise and reaffirm that the autonomy of the Olympic and Sports Movement is an essential condition for the development of sport and for the promotion of its values all over the world.
- Reaffirm that the Olympic Movement is exclusively for those who, freely and voluntarily, express their desire to be part of it. This condition implies that whoever is part of our Movement has an inescapable obligation, within the territory under his jurisdiction and within his field of competence, to observe, comply with and respect the Olympic Charter.
- Reaffirm the NOCs' will to collaborate with governments and other similar institutions, based on mutual respect, so that Olympic sport, at both national and international levels, becomes, in a real and concrete manner, the focus of our common action.
- Consider within the concept of autonomy, as defined in the Olympic Charter, the unique and sole competence assigned to the NOCs to decide and determine the clothing, uniforms and equipment to be used by the members of their delegations at the Olympic Games and in all competitions and events connected with the Games.



- Study the creation of an Olympic and Sports Network involving all members of the Olympic Movement that will allow it to have access to all the information necessary on the issue of autonomy, be informed of all cases of violations that may occur, exchange experiences and facilitate a global analysis on the exercise of the Olympic and Sports Movement's autonomy.
- Analyse possible amendments to the Olympic Charter that may contribute to greater clarity and precision in the rules that govern the autonomy of the NOCs.
- Define clearly the procedure to be applied in cases of conflict in which there is a violation of, or infringement upon, the autonomy of any member of the Olympic and Sports Movement.
- Emphasise that good governance and transparency are essential elements in ensuring respect of the Olympic and Sports Organisations' autonomy.

We are convinced that only joint work, close coordination and the widest general agreement on the actions to be taken among the IOC, the NOCs, the International Federations (IFs), the partners of the Olympic Movement and governments will allow us to discharge, while respecting everyone's jurisdiction, the duties and obligations we all have in relation with Olympic sport and the young people of the world.

Sport is the Olympic Movement's fundamental activity and motive for its existence, and it is also today a high priority for most governments, due to the fact, among other reasons, that there is a stronger awareness of its extraordinary role in education, physical development, production of values and ethical principles, as well as in promoting health and recreation among the population, especially children and young people.

Besides being a fundamental function of the NOCs, preserving our autonomy and resisting any type of political, religious or economic pressure is an essential prerequisite to reach the medium and long-term objectives the Olympic and Sports Movement has set itself, in relation with Olympic education, the fight against doping, and the promotion of peace, brotherhood and solidarity among all peoples of the world.

The NOCs have high expectations concerning the decisions that are to be adopted by the XIII Olympic Congress concerning autonomy, and, in this respect, they have prepared themselves with a great sense of responsibility in order to contribute all their experience, so that decisions may be adopted that make us stronger and that will strengthen the Olympic and Sports Movement's leadership all over the world.