



MOVING TOWARDS AN ACTIVE SOCIETY

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Thank you very much, President Rogge and President Vázquez Raña, for giving me this opportunity to speak at the breakout session on the theme “Olympism and Youth – Moving towards an active society”. I believe that this theme is not only important, but also very relevant as sport is the best instrument for influencing the behaviour of the youth of any country and projecting an aura of nationalism during competition, at the highest level.

Today, society exerts significant pressure on those who are growing up. The educational process must follow the rapidly evolving situation, take cognisance of some of its tendencies, and promote performance. This can only be achieved if young people have the necessary performance capability. In general, knowledge is accumulated through the traditional means of education and with parents at home. Attitudes towards sport are influenced by family, religion and culture. But what can give the motivation to enhance a person’s performance capability? To me there is no better answer than sport. We need to spread this message far and wide through such forums, especially in the developing countries, where the global competitive environment limits the participation of youth in sport because they are in quest of better job opportunities and hence focus more on their studies. In fact, sport and study can be managed side by side.

After a very long time, Indian athletes at last did well at the Beijing Olympic Games in August 2008. India gained her first ever individual gold medal, when Abhinav Bindra won the 10m air-rifle event, and there were two bronze medallists: 75kg boxer Vijender Kumar and 66kg wrestler Sushil Kumar. These athletes made the country feel proud. In addition to shooting and boxing, India also did well in archery, badminton and rowing. This has generated appreciation and awareness of sport across the country as never before.

Nonetheless, India has a long way to go in the field of sport. Our mission now and in future is to revitalise sport and build a strong foundation for Indian youth, which can inspire and lead them towards greater achievement. In pursuit of our mission, we aim to provide our athletes

with competitive opportunities in all sports at rural, urban, regional and national level, so that India becomes a nation where sports are an abiding national passion.

Besides providing physical training at its highest level, we believe that sport is an arena of moral values. These values are of the greatest importance for the forming of individual personalities in terms of physical, moral and social development, which in turn contributes to building a morally strong and sports-loving nation.

The National Olympic Committee (NOC) of India has come a long way since its inception in 1927. Every two years, National Games are organised, in which all the individual States participate. To date, we have successfully held 33 national events of this kind. Through this endeavour, sports infrastructure has been created around the country. The 34th National Games are due to be held in Ranchi from 21 November to 5 December 2009, with approximately 14,000 athletes expected to participate.

India hosted the multi-disciplinary South Asian Games (SAG) in Kolkata in 1987, and in Chennai in 1995, as a result of which sports infrastructure of international standards was created in both of the States concerned.

In addition to this, India has hosted the I and IX Asian Games, in 1951 and 1982 respectively, the I Afro-Asian Games, in Hyderabad in 2003, the Commonwealth Youth Games, in Pune in 2008, and we are confident that the XIX Commonwealth Games, due to be held in New Delhi in 2010, will further strengthen the sports movement in India.

I would like to inform the esteemed members about a new initiative of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP), which was officially launched by our President, Dr Jacques Rogge, on 16 October 2008 in Pune, India, during the Commonwealth Youth Games. This programme is part of the Olympic Movement’s Education Through Sport Programme, which aims at mentoring young people, using sport to instil human values and get them interested in physical activity at an early age. The programme aims to apply the discipline of sports to young people’s daily activities, teaching them the spirit of togetherness and fair play, appreciating one another, and promoting friendship, sharing and peace. The NOC of India is committed to seeing that this programme works well and achieves its goals in India.

As well as the OVEP, the IOC President inaugurated the National Club Games, a very promising NOC of India project, about which we are very enthusiastic. As the majority of India’s population lives in villages, the Club Games concept is well suited to them. The Club Games will begin at the village/ward level and cover all the States of India. It will be a multi-tiered event and will move upward through many stages. Effective implementation of the National Club Games at all levels in India is extremely important for the success of the project. We are confident that, through the National Club Games, the NOC of India will be able to successfully carry the Olympic message right down to grassroots level. It is perhaps pertinent to mention that India has the world’s largest youth population, with 40% of Indians under the age of 35.

It is, therefore, very important how young people perceive the Olympic ideals and how they can translate them into practice, how they live out Olympism, and how they are able, in the future, to help form the Olympic Movement in their home areas.



The school community should be encouraged to view sport as a vital tool and become an inspirational force, with much to contribute to the development of young people in the world today.

Schools should demonstrate the significance of Olympic ideals in a clearly identifiable way, including sport as a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

I put all my hopes in our young people. They are the vital force for promoting Olympism and making it an essential part of life.