



Olympism in Action
FORUM

BY THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Trends and Perspectives



Olympism in Action Forum: Trends and Perspectives

Synopsis

The Olympism in Action Forum covered a wide range of topics and themes on the most important issues on the agenda of sport. Participants from all walks of life – from government, business, culture, civil society and the Olympic Movement – discussed what trends will affect the future of sport.

The general consensus was that sport and the Olympic values are universally seen as enduringly relevant in today's world.

Throughout the discussions, the reforms introduced by Olympic Agenda 2020 were generally seen as an important step for the IOC and the Olympic Movement. The discussions also highlighted areas where work still needs to be done, and identified new challenges that the world of sport needs to address.

While the enabling role that sport plays to bring about social change was acknowledged and appreciated, it emerged that people expect sport to play an even more proactive part in addressing social challenges. Another common theme was the expectation for sport to continue to commit to action so that sport can play this enabling role to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

The Forum demonstrated strong consensus on the need for sporting institutions to exhibit the highest integrity if they are to retain the support of athletes, officials, the media and fans. This was echoed in discussions on protecting clean athletes, preventing abuse and harassment, and sport and human rights, and in addressing corruption and manipulation in sport.

The importance of education also emerged as a trend that touches many aspects of the sporting world. Educating athletes from an early age was seen as a crucial element in such things such as strengthening the protection of athletes, the fight against doping and especially in engaging young people with the Olympic values.

Urbanisation and digitalisation were seen as key trends that will affect the future of sport, from the way sport is practised to the way spectators experience it.

Engaging in partnerships with other stakeholders in society at large and the Olympic Movement was highlighted on several occasions as the most effective way to drive action and address future challenges. This applies to the organisation of future Olympic Games, to promoting social change – such as promoting gender equality, education and sport – and to strengthening efforts to combat corruption and manipulation.



Summary of main trends and perspectives

Future of the Olympic Games

The general consensus that emerged from the discussions was that **the New Norm introduced by Olympic Agenda 2020 represents a positive step**. The New Norm obliges host cities to focus on **sustainable legacy** from the beginning. The main challenge for the IOC is to bring all stakeholders on board to support the New Norm.

It was mentioned that the **debate over the economic value of the Games often puts too much focus on the cost and not enough focus on the benefits**. The analogy used was that of Christmas or Central Park which are both very expensive and arguably wasteful, but they provide lots of joy to lots of people. It was noted that legacy is often difficult to define. For this reason, it is **important to look at legacy multidimensionally, in terms of financial, infrastructure, skills development, brand of a city, sporting legacy, improved quality of life in the city and tangible and intangible factors, which are difficult to quantify**.

In this context, it was suggested that the IOC could use independent evaluators to assess the viability of candidate city legacy plans in the dialogue phase.

Representatives from four former Games cited several examples of how the Games benefited their cities. The examples included neighbourhood revitalisation, improved transport, new sports venues and programmes, skills-building, and educational and cultural programmes, as well as a number of intangible benefits, including a sense of pride and confidence.

Critical voices said that the costs still outweigh the benefits and that the New Norm has yet to show results. Even those voices agreed on two points: that the Games can deliver a powerful emotional impact that fosters unity and civic pride; and bringing athletes from around the world together creates a positive example of harmony.

Those supportive of the Olympic Games acknowledged the need to address the critics rather than dismiss their complaints out of hand, but also expressed frustration that discussions about cost often overlook the benefits of hosting.

Protecting athletes

There was consensus on the **central importance of education** in tackling the problems of doping, manipulation of competitions, and harassment and abuse in sport.

The discussions also highlighted the role of the entourage and the need to protect young athletes from unscrupulous coaches, trainers and, in the case of manipulation, those seeking to benefit financially from cheating.

There was general agreement that athletes must receive **education** from a very early age and continuous education about the dangers of doping, manipulation of competitions and the importance of having a supporting entourage that embraces clean sport.



There was considerable discussion on how the responsibility for educating athletes against these malpractices should be shared among key stakeholders in the Olympic Movement.

It was highlighted that harassment and abuse of athletes can exist across many sports disciplines. It is a shared responsibility to be alert of this and take the necessary action.

Role models are important. Clean athletes can provide a positive image and inspire others to compete clean. Even athletes who have admitted to doping can play an important role by highlighting the dangers and consequences of doping.

The recent **establishment of the International Testing Agency (ITA) was portrayed as a big step forward in rebuilding trust.** The ITA brings independence, transparency and expertise to the anti-doping fight.

The need for coherence and cooperation in the anti-doping system was stressed as an important factor to build trust.

Integrity of sport

Corruption is a major threat to the credibility of world sport. The commitment of athletes, dedication of officials and passionate support of parents and fans were all considered to be vulnerable if sports institutions and competition are perceived to be corrupt.

Educating athletes is equally important in preventing future match-fixing and protecting athletes. Coaches, entourages and older athletes are role models for the next generation and should address the issues relating to match-fixing and gambling at every level. **The growth of betting-related match-fixing was believed to present a fundamental threat to the credibility of world sport.**

The Forum explored a number of measures and initiatives needed to bolster integrity and counter corruption in sport. **Partnerships between sports bodies, intergovernmental agencies, government and law enforcement were considered vital.** Greater transparency, accountability, independence and inclusivity in sports institutions was encouraged.

Future of sport

Digitalisation was a recurring theme in the discussions on the future of sport. **Virtual reality and augmented reality were identified as having great potential for the future of sport,** both in terms of an audience's experience of sport and actual practice of sport.

Despite the rapid change brought about by digitalisation, the general consensus was that it will not fundamentally change the magic of the Olympic Games and the values they represent.

Digitalisation was also highlighted as the factor that will define the way that sport engages with fans in the future. There was general agreement that **social media and other digital platforms open up new possibilities to engage with audiences.** It was noted that the fan of 20 years ago is the same as the fan today and will be the same as the fan of 20 years from



now. The motivation that drives fans to sport stays the same. The challenge is finding ways to engage them.

The growth and popularity of esports, especially among young people, were acknowledged, and the growing engagement of the esports community and the Olympic Movement was noted. In this context, the discussions focused on the similarities and differences between esports and traditional sports. While there are similarities in the focus and concentration levels, as well as the preparation needed to compete at the top level in esports and traditional sports, participants questioned the overall **lack of athleticism and physicality** of esports, especially at the grassroots level. This raised the question of whether esports fit the traditional definition of sport, especially if the activity itself does not deal with sport.

In terms of the organisational structures, it was also pointed out that because esports are built on a commercial model, it is different from traditional models within the Olympic Movement. It was also stressed that any engagement between the Olympic Movement and esports **needed to reflect and promote the values of sport**.

Urbanisation

The increase in **urbanisation** and the **negative impact that living in a city** can have on the health of its populations, with modern urban environments often enabling a more sedentary lifestyle, were mentioned as concerning trends. According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) study that was cited¹, one in four adults and three in four adolescents are currently inactive. Physical inactivity also increasing as countries develop and incomes increase.

In addition to highlighting the physical, mental and social benefits of physical activity, the discussion focused **on the role that cities and urban planning** can play in making sport and physical activity more accessible and creating a more active world. It was noted that the urbanisation of sports also promotes a democratisation of them, making them more accessible to athletes and the public.

The urban concept of the Youth Olympic Games Buenos Aires 2018 is an example of this.

The trend towards urbanisation also highlighted the need for urban sports facilities and programmes, including in the developing world.

However, if sport is to have an impact, it was agreed that providing sporting infrastructure is not enough and that **coordinated efforts and partnerships** are required, focused on engaging a city's population, analysing its environment and changing its culture.

When **concerns were raised about the costs of such initiatives, it was suggested that these could be offset against the potential future savings made in healthcare**.

Regarding the Olympic Movement's role in supporting healthy, physically active urban populations, **participants suggested that the IOC could use its huge global presence to better promote participation at grassroots level**, while IFs and national federations were highlighted as potential facilitators for active societies.

¹ World Health Organisation, 2018: "Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world".



Olympic values

The power of sport and the Olympic values to bring people together, to motivate and inspire them to work towards a better world was mentioned across a number of sessions. Key points raised were around the common language sport provides, that it is non-discriminatory and a powerful way to connect people, communities and countries.

Sport's unique power to inspire peace was demonstrated through the example of the **Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018**, which succeeded in building bridges and opening dialogue between North and South Korea.

In addition, the **Olympic Truce** was highlighted as an important tool for the United Nations to help to bring sport into peacebuilding.

The **Refugee Olympic Team** who participated in the Olympic Games Rio 2016 was a powerful example of the power of sport to change the lives of the team members. The opportunity to participate provided them with a platform to connect with and inspire other young refugees to play sport.

Sport as driver of social change

These Olympic values are also important as drivers of social change by promoting equal rights, equal opportunities and empowering girls, women and young people. Many highlighted **sport as a platform for social inclusion and promoting cohesive societies**.

Throughout the Forum, discussions highlighted the vital role that sport can play in society to enable important developmental goals such as sustainability, peacebuilding, promoting healthy living and human rights.

In particular, the role of sport in making a significant difference to women and girls was discussed in depth. In this context, it was noted that 94 per cent of women in C-Suites in the US have played sport. Sport equipped these women with a "mindset" and it is then only necessary to teach the skillset, in terms of senior leadership.

With regard to gender equality, it was noted that the IOC has achieved significant results on Games programmes, progressing to equal participation at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. The IOC Gender Equality Review was also highlighted as a positive framework.

The importance and role of organisational and individual leadership in achieving gender equality were stressed. In this context, **there was a call for leaders to respond with urgency and commit to action across the Olympic Movement** and within IFs, NOCs, etc., and that this change will require leadership, commitment, practical action and special measures. It will also require accountability. It was noted that governments also have a role to play for society at large to make progress towards gender equality.

The role of sport as a **universal tool for education** was also discussed. In this context it was stressed that sport teaches important life values and empowers young people to create social change from an early age.



The discussion focused on the responsibilities of those in the Olympic Movement to **make education a priority** and invest in the programmes needed to disseminate the Olympic values through real and relevant values-based education programmes.

The speakers agreed that education programmes were vital in addressing societal problems and that the stakeholders of sport have the responsibility to use this powerful tool.

There was **broad consensus that the practice of sport needs to include the protection of the environment and sustainability initiatives**, and that this was the responsibility of the stakeholders in the Olympic Movement. **All speakers shared the sense of urgency to protect the environment for the future.**

Discussions on sport and human rights focused on how sports practice at large and sporting events in particular can help promote **human rights** and can act as a catalyst for social and cultural change, and better embed human rights protection at their core.

The importance of sport as a human right was also addressed. In this context, one concrete suggestion that was put forward to ensure equal rights for refugee children was the idea of a passport specifically for refugee and stateless children to give them access to sport and sport competitions.

The general view was that **sport can be an enabler of human rights, when preventing negative impact on people and finding appropriate ways to address them are built into projects from the outset**. It was suggested that this could be better achieved when working collaboratively with all stakeholders, creating a **platform for mutual dialogue and collective leadership** to ensure that the respect for human rights is central to the event or practice of sport. In addition, the importance of trust, credibility and transparency was highlighted.

The consensus that emerged from these discussions was that, while sport cannot solve everything, it is needed to address human rights risks in relation to its practice and events more efficiently. Similarly, sport should continue to play its role in creating awareness, with sporting events drawing attention to human rights abuses where they exist and helping to open dialogues with countries and governments that need to address these issues.

There was a discussion on **how sport and its values can be used to promote human rights and achieve social inclusion and cultural change**. It was stressed that sport can be used as an instrument to translate public policy commitments into demonstrable and understandable action for society, while also being used to empower young people to play a role in these social and cultural shifts.