

Christiana Figueres
Q&A 34th IOC Session
25 June 2019, Lausanne

MRS KLOSTER AASEN: Thank you and thank you President and IOC Members. Thank you, Mrs Figueres, for a very inspiring, although serious keynote speech. Climate change has been having devastating impacts on the biodiversity of our planet, and although biodiversity is addressed in the IOC Sustainability Strategy, what in your opinion do you feel needs to happen to halt what is being called in the media the sixth mass extinction of our time, and what are we actually experiencing now?

MRS BERHANE: Thank you very much. I'd like to join our President in congratulating you on giving us an inspirational speech. It's not a question, but I was reminded, in your speech, of what we are capable of doing – not only as an organisation, as the IOC, but as individual Members – what we are able to do to be impacted and have an impact within our nations as well. So coming from where I come from, it has become an impacting issue in our nations – what the future holds – to our young generation. So it's just to thank you for reminding us what we are able to do as representatives of the IOC within our nations. Thank you.

MR ALI: I was just wondering, since we are following all the good practices and are a role model – could you suggest a way where we could convey this to the general public at large, to create more awareness amongst them, some methodology whereby we could be used as a role model? Thank you.

MRS ESSAYAH: Ms Figueres, thank you for your inspiring speech. It was an alarming speech, but it was also giving hope for us all that there is still time for us to change our future. The IOC is often criticised because of the amount we are building new venues and also about the amount of travelling that we are doing. So what is your suggestion? How could we diminish our footprint as an organisation?

MR MEJIA OVIEDO: (Translated from Spanish) Congratulations for that presentation. I think that there are precedents and the suggestions that you were making regarding the candidatures are very encouraging – we could ask for this to be a requirement, like in China. I think that this was a requirement for them. I wonder if there are other experiences in other areas. I think that this should serve as real motivation for the future, and you describe that future very well. I think that we've got to take measures to prevent this getting out of control, and I think that we have to bear in mind that this International Olympic Committee is a standard bearer for the world, and so it's a big concern for us. Now I think that there should be a basic rule for the future hosts for Olympic activities, and we need to ensure that this is really respected in the full sense of the term.

MR ROLLAND: (Translated from French) Thank you President. I just wanted to thank Ms Figueres for that excellent speech we've just heard. I think it is both inspiring and also deals with a really difficult subject. Of course, sport, it has been said, can contribute to meeting all the challenges that we need to face today, including sustainable development and the whole issue of climate change. I think that the contribution from the IOC could be very important, particularly in terms of its highly symbolic nature. Ms Figueres was saying that one of the important aspects when we're dealing with climate change – we're talking about how fossil fuels are contributing to climate change. I have a suggestion – I think that one of the biggest symbols of Olympism is the cauldron, it's the flame that burns for 15 days, and we are burning fossil fuels. How can we be creative so that we can keep the symbol but also make sure that we don't use gas just to burn in order to provide a symbol? Because we use gas today to heat or to cook, but we don't really use gas for lighting purposes. So let us use the strong symbols that we have in the IOC to be able to raise awareness. Thank you.

MR SINGH: Thank you for that amazing overview. As a filmmaker, I was curious about what is being done to get this message out to the youth more specifically – because it's the legacy that's going to be left for them – and get them mobilised to influence the decision-making processes around the world. And also with regard to the global map, if you look at it and the effects of that, where do we actually go to get more information on all of this? And obviously there were some films, and listening to your apocalyptic outcome in 2035... Storytelling with films like *An Inconvenient Truth* was great, but I think if you can affect audiences and the public, that could make a huge difference.

MR ESTANGUET: Thank you Mr President. Maybe I will speak in English to help you understand the question. Thank you very much for your very inspiring speech, and you can count on the athlete community to be vocal and try to support this global challenge. My question would be, after the questions regarding how to reduce the carbon footprint – I would also be interested in your advice in terms of compensation. How to offset together, having a positive impact, because you spoke about a local and global strategy. And in terms of offsetting the carbon footprint, I think all of us, we are all involved in the organisation of big events, and nowadays I think the Olympic Movement is very concerned with and involved in making sure they are carbon neutral and that we compensate; but I think it would be interesting also to have a collective approach in terms of offsetting. Thank you.

MR POUND: Thank you very much and thank you for that comprehensive view of Armageddon. We live in a world that involves influence, of which we have some, and power, of which we have none, and I'm curious about your assessment as to the degree of serious commitment by the major political bodies regarding the crisis that you describe, and which almost every leader in the world recognises as a reality. And what to do about it?

MS RAPILLA: Thank you so much for your extremely important message today, especially the message that we are living in a climate emergency. The 2015 Paris Agreement was widely recognised as a historic agreement; I'm curious as to why things haven't dramatically changed since then. Thank you.

PRINCE FREDERIK OF DENMARK: Thank you, thank you Chair. Madam Figueres, I was just curious to hear from where you now stand – besides the UN and the IOC for example, which other organisations do you identify as most influential and important for addressing these questions we're living in right now, all these topics we have to deal with globally now?

MRS COJUANGCO JAWORSKI: Thank you for being here today and sharing your knowledge with us on climate change. Everyone has described it as Armageddon, but in reality it will get there unless we do something about it, and I do completely agree that we must begin with ourselves, and we must begin at home to also be able to appreciate the effort that needs to be made by everyone collectively to be able to address it. What I would love is for the belief that to live more naturally or to live more sustainably... It's an expensive way, it's an expensive investment, and while it's necessary for our future it's one of the biggest challenges as a messenger. Because I believe people know that it's necessary to do it, but the "how" becomes the question, especially for those who don't believe they have the resources to do it or who live their day-to-day existence. So if you could give us any way to address that as messengers, I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you very much.

MRS FIGUERES: Thank you very much for all of those very important questions. I am delighted with all of them and I'm very glad that I had a piece of paper handed to me and a pen to take note.

Let me start with the biodiversity one, because it's sort of off-field, and then I will address all of the climate ones.

The fact is that we have a climate emergency and a biodiversity emergency and an ocean emergency, because all of those are actually interlinked. It is only our very feeble human categorising mind that has put classifications as though those things were separate. If Mother Nature could laugh at us, she would really be laughing that we think that all of those things are separate. They're all part of the same, they're all what we call converging crises, and we must address them all at the same time. The good news is that, by addressing one, you have beneficial effects on all of the others. So we don't have to address them individually only; we can actually address them as a group, and that is very much what the Sustainable Development Goals are. But I'm happy to talk more about biodiversity later if you so wish.

Let me turn my attention to the issue of role modelling, both at the individual level and at the organisational level – absolutely fundamental. All of you are influential

individuals in your own right, in addition to being influential because you're Members of the IOC. And all of us have an incredible educational ability, an advocacy ability, that we're not really using because we have not woken up to the fact we stand at a huge human crossroads here. Individuals can reduce their footprint by being careful about what they eat, by transportation, by where you have your finances invested, what you are doing about energy efficiency in your home and, certainly in democratic countries, by how you vote. But organisations can also make a huge difference with the kinds of policies and decisions and measures that you've already taken here inside the Olympic family. Now the question is, has that actually – that sustainability commitment that has been taken at the top – has it trickled down, all the way down to the bases of the Olympic family? I think that is the challenge that is still at hand.

With respect to travel and buildings, I am very much with you on that challenge, but let me put it this way – we are human beings; there is nothing that we do on this planet, there's no human endeavour, that does not have some kind of a footprint. So to think that we can all of a sudden tomorrow morning wake up with no physical bodies and just little wings, and transport ourselves without a footprint, is illusory.

Let's be realistic; we all have a footprint, either as individuals or as corporations or as countries or as organisations – we all have a footprint. The point here is to make that footprint as light as possible through very careful decisions on how we transport ourselves, how we build, etc. And then after making that footprint as light as possible, yes, I am one for compensation.

Not everyone in the climate community would agree with me, but I am a firm believer that we need two drastic transformations here. One is at the individual level, our behaviour patterns. The other is systemic changes that need to occur in global electricity generation, in global transport, in global building, materials, building ways. So that systemic transformation is underway, but it is not yet at net zero.

So when we, as individuals, make use of those systemic structures, we have to compensate, because we are simply not little angels. Now you can easily compensate as an individual; I compensated my entire life footprint several years ago because I figured out what my footprint is per year. I then extended myself to 110 years old, because I thought let me be very generous, since my grandfather lived to 105, let's say that I live until 110 – and if I don't, it's fine, because I'm compensating more – and then I multiply times 10. And then I compensated my lifetime emissions; and you can all do the same.

As individuals you can all, right now, be carbon neutral and responsible and role models, because you can compensate for your emissions even while reducing the emissions, which is absolutely what we need to do. I do travel, you travel, the Olympics is based on travelling, and until we have transportation that is 100 per cent based on clean energy, we are going to have emissions from travelling. So, be careful about

how you travel, don't do unnecessary travel, but then compensate, because we cannot wait until 2050 to be carbon neutral. We as individuals need to move into carbon neutrality right now.

So all entirely doable. There are many different calculators out there. I have my preferred one, which is the UN calculator, but there are many out there – no excuse for anyone as an individual not to be carbon neutral by 5 p.m. today.

Same question goes for the flame and the gas. I have no idea what gas it is, if it's natural gas? Yes, it's not burning a huge amount, it is not going to be the one source of climate change, but it is an example. It is definitely an example. So any efforts to move that flame, which everyone looks to – if we close our eyes the one image that we all have is the flame... It would not be difficult to move that flame to biogas, which is renewable and does not emit greenhouse gases. Totally doable, and it would actually be a very symbolic change to make.

To the filmmaker, totally agree. You know we have millions of young people on the streets, right? 1.5 million by last count, and it will grow. In September, we have a huge meeting in New York called by the Secretary-General, and I'm sure that we will have many more millions of young people, because they have woken up and they are terrified about the horizon that they see for themselves. So they are putting pressure on all of us and saying: "You didn't do your job; what kind of a world are you giving to us?". And they're absolutely right, absolutely right.

So the problem with my wonderful youth is that they don't read or listen to anything that goes beyond 30 seconds. And so the challenge there, which many people are taking up, is how to put out messages that are very, very short, and how to put out messages in a very broad basket of media, because there are people who do like full-length films. There are people who still read books. If you do – congratulations. There are many books coming out next year on climate change, on doom and gloom, but there are also many positive books that are coming out, telling us how we can actually address this. So yes, there's a lot more material. We can do much more.

The IOC, if I may say, has not built up its communication capacity on this issue as well as on others, and if there is any room in the budget to increase your communications team, I would certainly be encouraging of that, because I don't think that you're using your microphone to its fullest extent. You have one of the most privileged microphones in the world; and it is something that you can use much better.

To power and influence, having influence but no power. I totally agree. That was exactly the situation that I had when I was running the negotiations. I had a lot of influence and absolutely no power because, as you know, governments are sovereign, and they will take no instructions from anyone. Influence is incredibly powerful. It's not power, but it's very powerful, and your influence on people that you know through your

corporate engagements, through your organisations, is absolutely key and is being used. For example, this September the Secretary-General is calling for a Climate Change Summit on 23 September 2019 in New York, where he's calling for all national governments and for civil society organisations, financial institutions, to come forward to say what they are doing about this. What are they doing and how are they contributing?

So to the question of the Paris Agreement – has anything changed? A lot has actually changed. What I find remarkable is the number of institutions or financial institutions – all the major financial institutions of the world, all the financial institutions that contribute to economic stability, have already understood that climate is the worst threat for economic stability in the world, and they are all pulling out of high-carbon assets, they're pulling out of coal, they're pulling out of oil and gas, because they know that those are the assets that are going to cause the problem. They also know that those assets are losing value.

So the financial world is moving. Not as quickly as I would want to, but they are moving. The insurance world is moving. Please understand that the insurance industry has already understood that if we go to a world that goes above 2 degrees, we go into a world that is systemically uninsurable. Please begin to comprehend what your lives and your activities on this planet are going to be if you cannot buy insurance for anything. So they are beginning to move because they understand the risk. So are companies that are producing renewable energy. We have today more renewable energy than at any other time in the world, and the cost is coming down to your point.

So renewable energy is no longer expensive; in fact it is the cheapest energy that there is. It is much cheaper than natural gas; it is much cheaper than coal; and it's much healthier for both the planet and for human beings. And so, particularly in developing countries, and I come from one myself – developing countries are waking up to understand. We can continue to develop, we can continue our economic growth, but we don't need the footprint that the northern countries had over the past 100 years. We can actually engage in much, much cleaner development; and that is actually a good thing.

There are some countries in the north, Denmark being one – because His Majesty the Prince is here – that are really leading the world with respect to renewable energy. The UK just took on a pretty amazing commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050, and they are calling for a Citizens' Assembly to discuss what the government is going to do. So actually a lot is happening, but not enough – and certainly not quickly enough.

Sir, on the most influential organisation on the science part – it is definitely the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And then on influence it just depends on which sector. If you're talking about finance, it is actually probably the group of 37 central banks that are now together as a network to assess the economic stability or

instability of unaddressed climate change. If you're talking about investments, it is the group of the largest investors, the sovereign wealth funds. If you are talking about health, it is actually the WHO. In every sector you see institutions and organisations that have moved up to the front and are really understanding what is in front of us.

(Speaks in Spanish) And the final question about the candidatures. I think that, quite honestly, there is a possibility – I should say a responsibility – for all the cities to serve as reference points. It was possible for Beijing, and therefore it must also be possible for all the others. We cannot get our athletes to compete in environments that are not healthy and which can cause lung and heart problems.

And finally, could I just finish here by saying, first, thank you very much for your engagement with this topic. I lay it at your feet. I would really like to emphasise that you have an extraordinary influence – not power, but influence, which in my book is more powerful – influence that you can really materialise on this topic. That this is a huge opportunity that you have not exhausted yet. And that the image that we should remember is that we, humanity, for the first time in the history of humanity, for the first time, we are standing with all the tools at hand. My parents' generation did not have the science to understand what was going on, they did not have the capital and they certainly did not have the technology.

Today, all of us alive today, for the first time, humanity has the understanding of the science. We have the technologies and we have the capital to actually address this, and this is a decision, a collective decision, that we're all taking already. Are we going to a world that goes to 2, 3, 4 degrees and is truly a disaster for everyone? Or are we going to a world that stays at 1.5 and less?

We are entirely capable of carving out that world for our children and for their grandchildren, but we have to take the decision now, and we have to act differently. But we can co-create a world that is based on the regeneration of nature and of the human spirit. A world that has much more solidarity with the vulnerable, a world that has much more peace because we will avoid water, food and land conflicts, and certainly a world that has much more stability, in which sports can continue to be the emblem of peace and solidarity.

Thank you.