International Olympic Case Study Competition

“Environmental Sustainability in the Olympic Movement”

Background and Context

2022/2023 Competition

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1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The overarching mission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is to place sport at the service of humanity. As an organisation dedicated to making the world a better place through sport, the IOC wholeheartedly believes that sport has an essential role to play in modern society. This is particularly important nowadays, having experienced the COVID-19 health pandemic, which reflected how our fragile world is increasingly interdependent and in need of smart solutions.

As stated in “Olympic Agenda 2020+5” (OA), the new strategic roadmap of the IOC and the Olympic Movement through to 2025, recent times and challenging circumstances have seen the emergence of some near-universal trends that will shape the post-coronavirus world. These trends, listed below, have been addressed in OA in order to ensure that the Olympic Movement contributes to a more peaceful and sustainable society.

**Solidarity**: Today, unity and peace are at risk because of increasing social, political and economic polarisation. The number of refugees and displaced persons is growing. Respect, inclusion and equality are eroding. Global solidarity is being challenged at a time when it is most needed. Yet solidarity rests at the heart of everything the Olympic Movement stands for. This is the opportunity for us to contribute to a more inclusive society and to peace.

**Digitalisation**: COVID-19 has accelerated the digitalisation of society. The physical and digital worlds are progressively merging. This gives us the opportunity to further embrace digital technology as a powerful tool to address people more directly and promote the Olympic values, while keeping in mind that currently about half of the world’s population remains digitally underserved.

**Sustainable development**: Competition for limited resources is increasingly leading to conflict; climate action is at a tipping point; and the interdependency between healthy people and a healthy planet is unmistakable. Amidst this evidence, sport has been recognised as an important enabler of sustainable development. We have the opportunity to make a real difference through our contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

**Credibility**: Trust in traditional institutions is declining, and younger generations are demanding more purpose from organisations and businesses. Our ability to make a difference will rest with the credibility of our institutions and competitions, by further strengthening integrity, transparency and good governance across the entire Olympic Movement.
Economic and financial resilience: The ongoing health crisis will have severe financial and economic consequences. Debts being incurred today to finance recovery programmes will need to be paid back tomorrow. This may lead to even wider economic gaps within societies and between countries, and to different priority-setting by governments and the business community. Our opportunity is to emphasise our contribution to the recovery from the crisis.

This new edition of the Case Study Competition (CSC) focuses on the Olympic Movement’s contribution to sustainable development.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

The IOC’s sustainability journey started at the 1992 UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Both the Olympic Winter Games Vancouver 2010 and the Olympic Games London 2012 raised the bar to new levels, and it has been the IOC’s goal to have subsequent Olympic Games build on these foundations. One example is the Event Sustainability Management System standard, ISO 20121, which was pioneered by the Olympic Games London 2012. This has rapidly become the recognised international sustainability standard for events (both sporting and non-sporting), and is now a requirement for Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs).

Sustainability was one of the main pillars of Olympic Agenda 2020, and in line with its recommendations, the IOC developed a Sustainability Strategy based on the IOC’s responsibility as an organisation, as the owner of the Olympic Games, and as the leader of the Olympic Movement. This strategy focuses on infrastructure and natural sites, sourcing and resource management, mobility, workforce, and climate. Additional information about the strategy and the outcomes achieved so far can be found here.

Sustainability remains one of the five pillars of Olympic Agenda 2020+5. Three out of the 15 new recommendations specifically relate to the theme of sustainability:

Recommendation 2: Foster sustainable Olympic Games.

Recommendation 10: Strengthen the role of sport as an important enabler for the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation 13: Continue to lead by example in corporate citizenship.
3. THE CASE STUDY CHALLENGE – “ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT”

This case study offers an opportunity for students from across the world to compete against each other in groups, acting as a true consultancy company. This year their task is to create innovative solutions that could help the world sports organisations to drive environmental change.

As mentioned above, when looking in particular at the IOC sustainability strategy, the IOC has three primary spheres of responsibility: as an organisation, as the owner of the Olympic Games and as the leader of the Olympic Movement. The IOC takes into account its roles and activities in each of these spheres and the relative degrees of control and influence it can bring to bear.

We therefore need smart solutions developed for the International Sport Federations to help in their presentation and advocacy for greener sport during the Olympic Games.